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Outline Of The Epistle To The Romans

Rome was the centre of the universal empire of the world, the Gentile metropolis; and Paul had not been there; but God had made him apostle and teacher of the Gentiles; 2 Tim. 1:11. In fulfilling his apostolic function, his heart was naturally drawn toward that seat of the empire and the Christians living there, or who flocked thither from all sides, to confirm them in the faith, and to establish the church forming in that important locality on the foundations of divine truth. This is what the epistle to the Romans presents us with. It is a summary of the great truths which form the groundwork of the gospel of Christ.

Let us consider a little the position of man, and of the world, before God. Christianity, it is evident, was not introduced at the beginning of the history of the human race. Already nearly 4,000 years had elapsed before the Son of God appeared among men. How many things had taken place under the eye of God during that long period!

Let us examine the grand traits of this history. God had created man innocent, and had placed him in a state of happiness in a terrestrial paradise. He, following the sad example of his wife who had listened to the seductive words of the tempter, disobeyed God, and lost at once his innocence and his happiness. He dares not to present himself before God. A bad conscience leads him to avoid His presence, even before the just judgment of God drives him from the garden, and from Himself, source alone of true happiness. Man, ungrateful, disobedient man, who had taken Satan for his friend and

his counsellor, in preference to God, having believed him rather than God Himself, was the slave of Satan and his own will, was lost! Being driven from the garden was but a natural consequence of his fall. The way to the tree of life was closed to him. He stays in the world outside, the slave of sin and death.

But God, in driving man out from His presence, had not forgotten to be gracious; and, in pronouncing sentence on the serpent, He speaks of a Redeemer who should destroy the power of the enemy of man. It was pure grace; and testimony was given of it in the very title of the Deliverer, “the Seed of the woman,” of her who by listening to Satan had plunged man into ruin; but before sending the Redeemer for the accomplishment of the work of redemption, man must be tried, and in every way, to see whether, such as he is, he could attain to the power of life eternal, or secure himself in a state of happiness. God knew well what he was. Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. But we are prone enough to entertain a good opinion of ourselves for it to be salutary for us to make trial of what we are, that the conscience, convinced of sin, may be willing to profit by pure grace and the goodness of God. So, during centuries, God left man without checks to the inclinations of his own heart. The Saviour had been announced, it is true, and a living testimony had been given on the part of God.

The names of Abel, Enoch, and Noah, shine in the pages of the holy scriptures, like lights in those remote ages. But the light itself shone in vain. Man corrupted himself more and more, so that after long patience God was led to wash corrupted humanity in the terrible scourge of the deluge. But He who is ever remembering His mercy

in the midst of His judgments, pointed out a means of salvation to those who alone had listened to His word; and Noah, with his family, becomes the parent stock of a new world.

But the terrible lesson of a world destroyed was lost upon man. Chastisements do not change nature. We soon find that idolatry is introduced and propagated in all quarters of the world. Thar is to say, to avail ourselves of the words of the apostle Paul, “the heathen sacrificed to devils and not to God.” God called Abraham in order to preserve in the midst of the world the knowledge of the true God, and that he might be the depositary of the promises of God, and that the promised seed should rise from his family. And Abraham, as well as Isaac and Jacob, his son and grandson, were strangers and pilgrims on the earth through faith. Of his posterity the Lord raised up an earthly people (called Israel, known generally, in the present day, under the name of Jews), that it might be a witness and preserver of the doctrine of the unity of the true God, against the errors of the heathen. In Abraham the call of grace from out of the world, and free salvation through faith, had been signally shewn in the ways of God, Now, a striking testimony as to the deliverance by the blood of a victim, substituted for the sinner whose penalty it bore, was presented in a figure; and this thought, this answer to the needs of conscience harassed by the conviction of sin, was spread through all nations; disfigured, doubtless, by the gross and abominable ideas of idolaters, who falsified the character of God in worshipping demons; but, in its first principle, as in its origin, a divine provision for the necessity of the sinner before a just God. When God called Israel to Himself

that they might be His people, He put ransom as the ground of their deliverance. The blood guarded them from the just judgment of God, and guarded them perfectly.

The people, come out of Egypt, are led through the desert to be tried, and at last are brought to Sinai. And now a principle quite new is presented to them. The covenant of the law is offered to the people; that is to say, the blessing and the enjoyment of promises under condition of obedience to the law of God. “If ye obey my voice,” said Jehovah to the people; “thou shalt be a peculiar treasure unto me.” “Do this, and thou shalt live.” This then is the principle of the law of God, a principle perfectly just, like the law, which was the rule of conduct which God proposed, and which the Lord Jesus summed up in those holy words: “Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself.” It was a perfect and admirable rule of what man ought to be, and which would secure happiness to the creatures living according to its requirements. Jehovah therefore proclaimed the law, under the form of Ten Commandments, with His own mouth to the people, at Sinai. If they kept it, they should be blessed; if not, they would be condemned and cursed.

Now the law, as it ought, proposed to them a perfect obedience, even (what is in fact alone such) the perfect obedience of the heart. “Thou shalt not covet.” It is evident that, if God was entering into relationship with man, He must look to the heart. “Thou shalt not covet.” To act otherwise would be to justify the hypocrite. The law was thus given. It was a holy, just, and perfect law,

which declared what man ought to be, in order to please God, and to have life eternal. If God was pure, holy, and just, man must be so to be happy. But mark here, if the law described what man ought to be, it did not at all declare what God was, except that He was just, and would punish the sinner. It is the gospel which shining, while it fully recognises this justice and the perfection of the law, reveals what God in grace is to him who transgresses it. We shall speak of it presently. Here let us follow our subject. The law, which required perfect righteousness and obedience in man, had been given—to whom? To man already a sinner? What can a perfect law do (and the law of God must be such) for a sinner? Condemn him in convincing him of his sin. Was it the law which was in fault? Quite the contrary: it was its holiness and righteousness which did thus. It was the necessary result of a perfect law given to a sinner. A rule gives neither life nor strength; it requires certain things, it gives nothing.

There is another result of the law. There is a will of his own in man. One knows it, one feels it, one sees it. The law forbids the gratification of our will. It is the expression of the will of God which we ought to obey. Our wills kick against the will of God. We always desire to do that which is forbidden. Forbid a child to look into a basket to see what is therein, and a longing will begin to stir at once in its heart. It would not have thought of it, had it not been told not to look inside the basket; but now it wishes to examine it. Sin finds an occasion in the law. The unbeliever will say, perhaps, “How unjust to give us a law which can only condemn us! “One might say so indeed, however useless it would be to contend against God, if it were true that God had given it in

order that we might be saved through its means; but this is what He has not done. God gave the law that sin might be made manifest, and that sin by the commandment might become exceedingly sinful—to shew, not only that man had committed sins, but that his will was wicked and corrupt, and so audacious, that he would commit them in spite of God's prohibition; and so wicked, as a will, that a prohibition was only an occasion for this will to wish to leap clean over the barrier which might oppose itself to it. It is Christ who saves, not the law. Israel, to whom God committed the care of this law, had transgressed it in making a golden calf even before Moses had come down from the mount with the tables upon which God had engraved it. The patience of God, however, still shewed itself in sending prophets to put Israel in remembrance of the requirements of the law, and of the goodness of God, proclaiming with increasing light the accomplishment of the promise of the Messiah. Israel despised their warnings and their testimony. At last John the Baptist, herald of the King of Israel, of the Christ of God, arrives; and soon after the Lord Himself appeared on the scene. "I have yet my Son, my only Son," said God, proclaiming Himself under the figure of a parable— "they will reverence my Son."

We all know what happened to the Man of sorrows. "Behold," said the husbandmen (to use still the words of the parable), "Behold the heir! come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours." The Son of God appeared—they spat in His face, and crucified Him. Such is the history of the world: is man wicked or not? And consider what the Son of man was—it was no more the law; for, although the Son was born, in His grace, under the law, He was the manifestation of the love and of the

goodness of God, even towards those who had transgressed it. He did them good— He did not impute their sins to them. It was God in the midst of men and their misery—God delivering them from it without imputing to them the sin that had brought them there. He required nothing, bore everything, and healed their sick. He gave to eat to those that were hungry; He raised their dead. It was power and divine love; but it was the light, it was God Himself; and whatever His goodness might be, man would not have Him.

The Jew alas! hated Him; the Gentile, despising Him, rid himself of Him, to avoid the tumult raised by the jealousy of the Jews: all, unknown to themselves, accomplished the will and the counsels of God. The crime, without parallel, which the sin of man committed, was the testimony and the accomplishment of the perfect love of God, The victim of propitiation was sacrificed. The blood which redeemed, which accomplished our salvation, was spilt. Man had been left without law—corruption and violence had characterised the world. Man had been put under the law, with all the privileges of the presence of God in His temple, with the testimony of the prophets, the ordinances and the direct government of God; he had transgressed the law, despised the prophets, and forsaken God for idols of his own choice. The Son of God Himself, God manifested in the flesh, had appeared on the scene of misery which man had created for himself by his own sin, the testimony of the infinite goodness of God. The world knew Him not, the Jews would not have Him—they all united together in rising against the Lord and His Anointed. They spat in His face and crucified Him; they hated Him without a cause. Sad picture! We prefer our

own way to everything. Thus man has been tested in every way—the tree was bad. Now comes the question. What will God be with regard to man, wicked man? A just Judge doubtless, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, to look at sin. Grace and love will He be before He begins with judgment.

It is here that the epistle to the Romans begins its instruction, addressing the Gentiles on the one hand, and the Jews on the other. Let us sum up in a few words the thread of thoughts which the Holy Spirit presents us with in this important part of the word of God.

In chapter 1, after having announced Christ as the Son of David, heir of the promises made to Israel, and Son of God in power, addressing himself affectionately to the Christians at Rome, he proclaims at once the gospel as the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first; and also to the Gentile, because a righteousness of God is revealed therein. Man had none for God; God has one in His grace for man, sinful and wretched man.

Now, if God has revealed it as a righteousness which is His own, and which He has made available for man; if God, I say, has revealed it as a righteousness perfect and accomplished on His part, it is through faith that we must receive it. It is faith which receives a revelation; it is faith which lays hold of and trusts to an accomplished fact. The aposde Paul asserts that the wrath of God is revealed against all unrighteousness. What was there else amongst the heathen? Against all ungodliness in men who held the truth in ungodliness. Had not such been the case with the Jews up to that day? And may we not add now, alas, with many of the most orthodox persons who call themselves Christians. The patience of

God had lasted long, but He has fully revealed Himself in Christ, and every sin whatsoever, put into the light, is unbearable.

In the course of chapters i and 2, the apostle shews the horrible iniquity which characterised the state of the heathen3 and the culpability of the Jews. Noah's family had known God; his descendants would not retain this knowledge. Proofs also of scripture, and of the power of the only true God, surrounded them everywhere! They were inexcusable. They had degraded the very idea of God. They were left to degrade themselves. Philosophers and moralists judged well of this state of things. Were they changed themselves? By no means. Could God accept of such things? Surely not. What of the Jews who boasted of the law, and wished to be the instructors of the ignorant? They transgressed the law of which they boasted, and the name of God was blasphemed among the heathen through their means.

It was not the outward appearance of man that was of any value in the eyes of God. He looks at the heart. Did the apostle deny then the privileges the Jews had above the heathen? By no means. But the possession of religious privileges renders those who do not profit thereby more guilty; so likewise the doctrine of Christ renders more culpable those who possess it, if they are not real and living Christians. Now the apostle shews to the Jews, by passages taken from their own scriptures, that they were condemned; so that, he says, every mouth is stopped, and the whole world stands guilty before God. By the works of the law shall no man be justified before God, for those who had the privilege of that law were so much the more guilty in that they had transgressed it. Who can stand before the law of God?

Who can say, “I have not transgressed it! “How can one justify oneself by a law one has transgressed? By the law is the knowledge of sin. What is to be done? Hear what the apostle says: “But now the righteousness of God without the law is made manifest, being witnessed to by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.”

It is the precious blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, which is the only answer (which God Himself has furnished to us) to the demand of the justice which condemns the sinner. It is the righteousness of God by Jesus that makes righteous the man who has no righteousness to present to God, so that God is just in justifying him that has faith in Jesus. What grace! What a blessing for the poor sinner who has a heart broken enough and cleansed, sufficiently true for him to condemn himself! Boasting is excluded through faith in Jesus. We have now summed up the great principles of the first three chapters.

In chapter 4 the apostle, in reasoning with the Jew, presents to us other considerations in support of the divine thesis which he treats of. What shall we say of Abraham, the honoured and recognised chief of Israel, and the father of the faithful? He was justified by faith before the law was given, before even he himself was circumcised. But this is not all. On what did he himself rest? On the power of God who raises the dead. For there he was, as to the promise that was made to him;

and this was imputed to him for righteousness. “If we believe in him who has raised Jesus from among the dead.” That is to say, faith is in Him who, not only by the blood of the precious Saviour has satisfied the demands of the justice of God; but (when Jesus has borne in our place the punishment due to sin, has borne our sins in His own body on the tree, has been delivered for our offences and died for us) God, in His mighty power, raised Him, and has there done with our sins once for all, and has placed us (who believe in Jesus) in Him, in His presence, fully justified by means of what Jesus has done, since He has done it for those who believe. In believing, therefore, in this work of Jesus, we know that He has taken away our sins, and has placed us in the actual enjoyment of the favour and of the grace of God, before whom we find ourselves according to the efficacy of the work of Christ, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. This is what chapter 5 reveals to us. There also we find two principles of infinite importance.

The love of God does not find any motive in us, but in Himself, in His nature, all the while that it finds the occasion of displaying itself in our misery. The gospel is the glad tidings, that the love of God has made provision of a perfect righteousness in Christ Jesus for poor sinners who had none— a righteousness which we enjoy through faith in Jesus, so that all is a gift—all is gratuitous—to Jesus belongs all the glory— He alone is worthy. We are made partakers of it through grace. Perhaps a man would die for a good man. It was when we were yet without strength that Christ died for the ungodly. We may reckon on that love. If God has reconciled us by the death of Jesus when we were enemies, He will save us to the end through His life.

The second principle in this chapter is, that the question is not only concerning the law, we must go back as far as Adam, the head of the human race. All fell and were ruined in him, having superadded, at the same time, their own sins— “The law entered to make the offence abound.” Sin was already known as a principle: the law in forbidding it, made of it an offence, a positive and formal transgression of every act which sin has produced in us. But God be blessed! Where sin abounded, grace has much more abounded. But as by the disobedience of one (that is to say, Adam) many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one (we are made just through the obedience of Jesus) many shall be justified; so that as sin has reigned in death, grace has reigned through righteousness unto life eternal by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now the unbeliever, man’s wicked heart, may be ready to say here, “Ah! since it is through the obedience of One that we are constituted righteous from being unrighteous, which I am; and since where sin abounded grace has much more abounded, let us sin that grace may abound.” Doubtless that is what the flesh likes. Here is the answer of the apostle. How are you made a partaker of this divine righteousness in Christ? It is because He has died to sin, that He has done with sin in His death (He, who always was without sin), and that He is risen; and that you have been baptised unto His death, in order that you might thus have part in His resurrection. Now if you are dead to sin by faith in Him (and that is what faith would say, that is the meaning of your baptism), how live in sin? You have no part in the death of Christ if you still live in the flesh. If you are made partaker of justification, it is in Christ, by the

power of the life in which He is risen. To have part in Christ as being dead and risen, is not to live in sin, but quite the contrary. So that to enjoy this perfect justification in the soul implies necessarily the death to sin and the life of God in the soul, because we possess this justification in Him alone, who, for us, has died to sin once, and lives to God always. But what is to be done with the law? Here is the answer. We have shewn that the true Christian is dead with Christ, being made a partaker with Him who died on the cross. Now, the law knows not how to accuse a dead man: so that instead of being condemned by the law as sinners, we live (as of a new life) unto God, in order to glorify Him by good fruits, which we bear by His grace, being already fully justified by the work of Christ Himself.

At the end of chapter 7, the apostle pictures the inward conflict which is found in a soul, which, being renewed, loves the righteousness of the law; and in its desire to fulfil it, makes experience of its own weakness and want of capacity, and which has not yet learned, notwithstanding its sincerity, to submit itself to the righteousness of God—a righteousness already accomplished through grace. The moment it submits and seeks (not to do something to make itself better, but) the Deliverer, it is made free. The soul is made free—fruit of grace—when, instead of looking to itself, it looks to Jesus and to His work. It will never be satisfied with itself if it is sincere, and if it recognises what it ought to be before God. But God Himself is satisfied with Jesus, and with the work He has done for that poor soul. He has been fully glorified as to His love, as to His righteousness, as to His majesty and His claims for the obedience of man, as to His truth, in every way. God has been glorified in

the work of Christ on the cross, and the soul can trust itself to it fully before God. There is, therefore, no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

Now if they are in Jesus Christ, what belongs to them? what characterises them? “No Condemnation.”—Then they are made free from the law of sin and of death. Sin, as a principle of their nature, is no more a law to them. The conflict still continues; but sin is no more a law to us, because the power of the Spirit of life that is in Christ Jesus has made them free, which the law could not do because of the flesh. God has made for us, by the coming of Jesus, sacrifice for sin. He has condemned sin in the flesh. That is to say, the law could not get to the end in condemning this criminal, this rebel, who always justified himself in the flesh which nourished him, and which the law could not change. Now Christ, as sacrifice for sin, in delivering us from the imputation of sin, having taken it upon Himself, succeeded in condemning sin in our nature, while making us ourselves free from the condemnation.

Having life in Him, sin is no more really as it was before; the believer, born of God, and quickened by the Spirit of life, loves the things which are of the Spirit; as those who are of the flesh love and seek after the things which are of the flesh. Now we thus make this solemn discovery, that the affection of the flesh (that is to say, our whole nature before we are renewed) was enmity against God, and thus it was impossible that we should please God. Now it is evident that a real change of heart is necessary when the question is about enmity against God. For what art thou that provest that we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit? It is not something of man, it is that the Spirit of God dwelleth in us. But if it be thus,

the body is not the source and the motive power of our life. It is considered dead, for it produces nothing but sin. It is the Spirit who is life, for He produces righteousness. Now we have this precious confidence, that if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus dwells in us, this same power operates likewise in us, and God will raise up again our mortal bodies by His Spirit which dwells in us.

It is those that are led by the Spirit who are real children of God. And what a blessing! Children of God! This is no vain title. It is to enjoy the love of the Father—it is to be assured of His favour. It is to be accepted in the Beloved. It is to be able to trust ourselves (without the thought that He is imputing to us our sins from which Christ has washed us) to the goodness, to the fatherly affection, of God. The Holy Spirit dwells in the children. He can do so since they are washed in the blood of Christ, He gives them the full assurance that they are the children of God. This is then Christian life. Washed from our sins in the blood of Jesus, the Spirit that dwells in us leads us by spiritual affections, and at the same time gives us the perfect assurance that we are children of God.

Now see the beautiful reasoning of the Spirit of God. If I am a child, then am I an heir, an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. What titles to the glory! Then the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Afterwards the creation itself, not only the soul, at the time of the glorification of the children, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption. Grace delivers the soul from it now. Glory is about to deliver even creation itself. We have salvation. We are waiting

for the redemption of the body. While waiting we have the earnest of the Spirit who dwells in us, and He groans in us according to God, and gives a voice to the actual sufferings of the creation, although often we ourselves know not what we should pray for—to help us in our infirmities. Now God who searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit when He intercedes thus in us. Thus, in the real believer, who has submitted to the righteousness of God accomplished in Christ, the Holy Spirit dwells, as the spring of a faith holy and infinite, while giving me the consciousness of being a child of God and heir of the glory, and as Comforter amid the sufferings of the present time, urging the soul to seek relief in God, with groanings that cannot be uttered.

Now in all this, that happy soul is the object of the thoughts and of the counsels of God. It is not of our own will that this has happened; neither the Gentile nor the Jew sought Jesus according to the Spirit. It is of grace. It is the counsels of the God of love. He makes all things work together for good—for the very best—to those who love Him, whom He has called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son—what grace!—that He might be the firstborn amongst many' brethren. Those whom He did predestinate, them He also called, and whom He called, them He also justified, and whom He justified, them He also glorified.

What precious links in God's ways to assure our blessing! So that as there is no condemnation for those that are in Jesus Christ, there is no separation from the love which has placed them there—never. Behold where grace, where the love of God, puts us. Through Him we

are more than conquerors in all the difficulties and sufferings which happen to us on the road.

Here terminates the doctrine of the epistle properly so called. In the three chapters which follow, namely, chapters 9, 10, 11, the apostle answers an objection which an unbelieving Jew might very well make to trouble a sincere believer of his own nation. “If you say that there is no difference; that Jew and Gentile are equally sinners, and that we must, as being in the same abyss of condemnation, submit to God’s righteousness; what do you do with the promise made to Israel? How reconcile the privileges of that people, as descendants of Abraham, with the complete levelling of everything, in order to make of all men, without distinction, a race of sinners in Adam? “In chapter 9 the apostle answers, “You cannot support your own thesis. If you trust to your descent from Abraham, without having respect to the sovereignty of God, you must admit Ishmael to the privileges of Israel; moreover you must admit the Edomites as the posterity of Esau.

“God has been sovereign to your profit, and it is well He is so. Now, He will exercise this sovereignty in favour of some poor Gentile sinners, in calling some to participate in the salvation by Christ. But if you will have righteousness, you have made the golden calf. God did spare you on the principle of His sovereignty—the passage is quoted from Exodus, and it is what God told Moses on the occasion of the idolatry of Israel at Sinai—‘I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion; and I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.’ Now, if He spared you on this principle, He will do likewise towards some poor Gentile sinners.”

Afterwards, it is proved by the prophecies, how God had foretold that there would be only a little remnant that would be saved from among the Jews; that the nation would stumble upon the stumbling-stone, that is to say, upon Christ (He being the end of the law for righteousness to every believer), and that God had declared at the same time, that whosoever should call on the name of the Lord should be saved. Precious promise! Thereupon He shews that consequently the gospel was to be preached to all, that they might all call on the name of the Saviour. And he quotes the testimonies of the prophets against Israel as a proof of their rebellion against the gospel of Christ. In chapter 11 He asks, “Will the promises of God fail towards this people? “By no means. 1. “Already,” says he, “there is a residue according to the election of grace.” 2. God called the Gentiles to provoke the Jews unto a holy jealousy: therefore it was not to reject them. 3. In the latter days they will certainly be brought back to the enjoyment of their privileges according to the promises and the testimony of God. But that God had shut them up in unbelief, as were the Gentiles by nature, in order that it might be pure grace on His part towards all, whether Jew or Gentile.

In the chapters following the apostle rests on these principles (mercy in God)—exhortations to a walk that responded to this goodness, and that sought only His perfect will with the intelligence of a renewed mind. He exhorts them to moderation, to meekness, to use their spiritual gifts, whatever that might be, with diligence, confining themselves to what God had communicated to each of them, to the spirit of grace—of kindness towards the saints that were in want, to patience when they

suffered wrong (“vengeance belongeth to God”), to submission under the authorities as being ordained of God; in short, to imitate Christ in their walk, and not to seek to satisfy the flesh. He sums up his doctrine in chapter 15, and confirms it by quotations taken from the Old Testament, and sends affectionate salutations to the Christians whom he personally knew at Rome.

Notes On Romans

Introduction.

The following little work is composed of notes taken down from lectures, which had an entirely practical object. They have been corrected, as such notes generally need to be; but I have thought, as the aim was entirely practical, a short analysis of the structure of the epistle might help the reader in understanding it.

There are two great subjects in scripture, when the truth is fully brought out as in the New Testament: the responsibility of the first Adam and his children; and the purposes of God in the last Adam. The work of Christ accomplished in His infinite love meets both for those that believe. He has met their responsibility in dying for them, and bearing their sins; and, glorifying God in that death, laid the ground of the accomplishment of those purposes in their favour. Of this latter part, the epistle to Romans only just leads us to the edge in chapter 8, and the very last verses of the epistle. The epistle to the Ephesians unfolds it fully. Hence the epistle to the Romans considers men as walking in sins—the Ephesians as dead in them, and establishes the truth of a new creation, not the justifying of a sinner, though sealing that truth. Colossians is between both. This I cannot go farther into here. These truths are incidentally mentioned in other parts of the New Testament. But the structure of the epistle to the Romans is very important as to the truth it contains, and this I will now endeavour to point out.

The first 17 verses of chapter 1 are a kind of preface, in which, in the first instance, the person of the Lord Jesus,

the Son of God, is put forward as the primary subject of the gospel: seed of David according to the flesh, and so fulfilment of the promise, and proved Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, in which, while His fife was according to that power, resurrection was the proof of it, so that power was witnessed as well as promise fulfilled, and that in the place of man's weakness and Satan's power, and even where man in life was tempted.

At the close of this passage he declares he was not ashamed of the gospel, for it was God's power to salvation to every one that believed, Jew first and then Greek. Because God's righteousness was revealed in it on the principle of faith, and so to faith wherever that faith was found. He was a willing debtor in grace to all, according to this gospel. He then shews why God's righteousness must be revealed, the only ground for man to stand on. Because the wrath of God was revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness where the truth was held in unrighteousness; not governmental judgments, as in the Old Testament, in Israel, and even in the flood, but the necessary rejection and judgment of all sin by the very nature of God. He then proceeds to shew the state of sinfulness which called for this wrath, and made this righteousness necessary.

All are under sin. This reaches from chapter i:19 to chapter 3:20, when he returns to the righteousness of God again. Gentiles are proved guilty, chapter 1:19 to the end; moralists, chapter 2:1-16, where responsibility and the place of conscience are dealt with; the Jews, chapters 2:17 to 3:20 (in the last section, verses 1-20, admitting their claim of the law as theirs, and addressed

to them, and shewing what it said of them). Then, from verse 21, the righteousness of God is treated of, and declared in propitiation through Christ's blood for Old Testament past sins of believers, and present revelation of it, so that God was just, and justified believers. This only confirmed law in its requirements.

Chapter 4. The resurrection of Christ is applied as the seal of this work, but it does not carry righteousness farther than forgiveness, and all applies to sins and offences—things done when each individual has his own place.

Chapter 5:1-11 draws the blessed conclusion, peace, favour wherein we stand, and hope of the glory of God; then glorying in tribulations, God's love being known for the profit derived, and finally in God Himself, through Jesus, through whom we have received the reconciliation. Here first the Holy Ghost, as given to us, comes in.

From verse 12 of chapter 5, the apostle treats not of sins, where all must be individual, but of sin, and so heads all up in Adam and Christ, the disobedient man and the obedient man, and distinguishes the law as that which came in by the bye to make the offence abound; but what were really in question, were sin and grace—grace reigning through righteousness by the obedience of Christ. The question here is not of sins, but of sin; one man's disobedience, not each man's offences, though the obedient man had to meet these too. But if one man's obedience made us righteous, might we live on in sin? This leads to the truth that the profession of Christianity was the profession of having a part in death, hence not of living on. Christ died to sin once and lives to God; we

are to reckon ourselves dead and alive to God in Him. Thus the old man is counted dead: how shall we live in it? This sets us free—free to live to God.

Chapter 7 applies this to law, because law has power over a man only as long as he lives. We are dead to it by the body of Christ; and are married to another, Christ risen. The end of the chapter gives the salutary experience of the state of the renewed mind under the law, which leaves a man captive under the law of sin in his members. In Christ all is changed, the man is delivered, though the flesh, as such, would serve the law of sin; but (chapter 8) there is no condemnation in Christ, the power of life in Him has set us free, and sin in the flesh has been condemned when He died a sacrifice for sin. Then comes the Holy Ghost in us; first as the power of life and the new man, and deliverance into resurrection (v. 9-11), then His presence in us, a person dwelling in us. Being sons, He gives witness with our spirit that we are so, shews us the glory in hope, and helps us in our infirmities on the way, gives a voice in our hearts to the sorrows of a creation subject to vanity, of which we are a part as to our body.

From verse 28 we have the security and portion in every respect derived from God’s being for us, from His own foreknowledge, to glory itself.

Chapter 5:1-11 gives what God is for sinners in grace and its fruit; chapter 8, the state of the delivered soul before Him. What leads up to the former being our sins met in grace, in Christ’s propitiation—to the latter, our sin from which we are delivered by our having died with Christ, and so being freed from it, and alive in Him. In the former case the sins are forgiven,, in the latter the

sin has been condemned, but in a sacrifice for sin, and we, having died with Christ, are delivered. This finishes the doctrine of the epistle—the way in which God in grace has met the sins, and the sinful nature of man, his whole condition in Adam, through Christ.

The place of chapters 9 to 11, as reconciling the obliteration of Jew and Gentile in Christ with the special promises to the Jews, is sufficiently indicated in the notes themselves. On the hortatory part which follows no notes were furnished me. I give here a general idea of the contents: the details must be learned from the chapters themselves.

It begins with the principle of all practice connected with the doctrine of the epistle, which supposes man a sinful creature, and dealt with in grace. The Ephesians takes higher ground, as the Christian is there simply a new creation, and so associated with God; and as dear children, God's own ways and dealings are the principle and pattern of the Christian's walk. His works are fore-ordained, as is his place. See chapters 4 and 5, where God, as love and light, gives the measure of our ways. In Romans we have sinful man dealt with in mercy, the death of the old man being alone the means of walking aright. In both Ephesians and Romans Christ is the pattern in absolute giving up of self. "I beseech you," says the apostle, "by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." The two hinges of all Christian service—the mercies of God, and our presenting ourselves, made free by grace, as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. The unity of the body is then assumed, which is no part of the doctrine of the epistle; any more than our resurrection with Christ,

which involves it; on this are grounded our duties within amongst the saints, and as such.

Chapter 13 gives our duties to those around, with a double motive: love to the neighbour fulfils the law, and the night far spent, the day at hand, full deliverance drawing near. Then in chapter 14 is our relation to Christ, and consequently to all who belong to Him, that we should not put stumbling-blocks before the feet of those with whom we are alike subject and responsible to Him, and for whom He died. This part goes down to the end of verse 7 of chapter 15. Then he sums up what he had been teaching concerning Jew and Gentile, to whom reference had been made in what precedes concerning the weak in faith.

The whole closes with the statement of his thoughts and plans, and his salutations, which are more numerous than usual, as forming a link between him and the saints at Rome, whom he had never seen. The last verses of all are a statement of what the work was that was going on by his means according to eternal counsels, and now made known for the obedience of faith by prophetic scriptures.

Chapter 1.

I take up this epistle to the Romans, not with intention of entering into every detail, but to trace the general idea of the purpose of the Spirit of God in it, and the course of the apostle’s reasoning. We have before noticed the distinction between the epistles of Paul and those of John. The main subject of John’s epistles being the character of the divine life which was with the Father, manifested in the Son, and communicated to us through the Spirit—so that the divine nature in us

should be able to realise the affections of the child of God; of Paul's, the presenting of man to God. Thus the general scope of John's epistles is, first, the manifestation of the divine life; second, the communication of it; while Paul's epistles have another character altogether—insisting on justification, and revealing the counsels and ways of God, and the consequent relationship in which the redeemed are put before Him.

The great subject of the New Testament, besides the blessed person of the Lord and the revelation of God in Him, is the manifestation and communication of the divine life, the making us partakers of the divine nature, and the bringing man to God according to His righteousness and counsels in Christ. The child derives his life from his father, and there results not merely likeness of character but a peculiar relationship.

I would just advert here to the four truths prominent in the New Testament: first, the manifestation and communication of life; second, the accomplishment in Christ of all the promises given from Adam downwards, presented in Christ to the Jews, His people; third, mercy to the Gentiles (as in Romans 15:8, 9, Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles should glorify God for His mercy); fourth, our place as sons, and the church as united to Christ,- its Head. The first is especially in John's epistles—the manifestation, then the communication, of the divine life. The second and third are found in Romans, with the groundwork of our place as sons, and only a glance in the second part at the fourth, which is fully brought out in Ephesians. The character of this is only hinted at

practically, not taught, in Romans. The fourth point of truth, which is revealed in the epistle to the Ephesians, is distinct from the promises to the Jews and the mercy to the Gentiles, being a new thing, though connected with the latter. The seeing these distinctions greatly facilitates the understanding of the epistles, and clears up passages, otherwise obscure.

In Romans we have two great subjects brought out: the accomplishment of the promises made to the Jews; and mercy to the Gentiles; and, in so doing this, Paul lays the foundation of all relationship between God and man. The beginning of this first chapter is thus an introduction to all that is afterwards unfolded in the epistle. Remark here, that in the first presentation of the gospel, it is the person, not the work, of Christ which is found in grace, but important as to the claim of subjection to Him, Son of David and Son of God with power. Then, in verse 16, he is not ashamed of the gospel, because the righteousness of God is revealed in it. The epistle to the Romans has this large character naturally enough, as it consists well with the address to the great centre of the world's empire; for Paul was writing to the Romans, whom he had never seen, as the apostle of the Gentiles, and takes his stand on the high ground of being the one to whom God had committed His counsels. So Peter, in addressing the Jews already scattered in the world, presents resurrection as a living hope, and, speaking to them on this new principle of resurrection, says, "as strangers and pilgrims," etc., thus carrying on what was consequent upon it, in reference to those who are to participate in it.

In a great many of the various epistles we see the instructions and exhortations suited to the varied need

of those addressed and called out by their state: as, in Corinthians, moral evil is treated of; in Colossians, warning against slipping away from the Head; in Galatians, falling from grace through the adoption of the law, is insisted on; in Thessalonians, the coming of the Lord and the errors into which trouble of mind had thrown them in this respect. But the epistle to the Romans, being addressed to the capital of the world and to those with whose circumstances the apostle was not familiar, takes the wide scope of man's responsibility, Jew and Gentile, and how grace has met it, and lays the sure foundation of the relationship of man to God.

There are two parts in the doctrinal teaching of this epistle. Up to the close of chapter 8 forms the first part; and chapters 9, 10, 11, form the second part; while the concluding chapters are occupied with precepts. In the first part you get Jews and Gentiles reduced to the common condition of sinners; but the Jew would object, and say, If this be so, that there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile, how then is God to make good His promises to the Jews? This difficulty is answered in chapters 9-11, the infallibility of the promises of God being shewn in chapter 11. But the common ground, on which both Jews and Gentiles are set, is in perfect salvation in Christ Jesus, and remains in all its force. It is important to remark in this epistle the way in which Paul sets man aside as being proved a sinner, poor, vile, and lost, and that he does this to bring God in. It is not merely that he introduces man as a sinner, but man must be thoroughly put down, in order to bring in God Himself instead of man, that God may act toward man in His own way and according to His own character.

We see a striking example of the same way of exhibiting grace in Ephesians 2. After the Jews and Gentiles had been spoken of as alike children of wrath, all is passed over, and God is brought out in His own character as rich in mercy, shewing what He has done, and what He is to such as they are. We can have no settled peace or rest of heart till we are on this ground; nor can we know God so as to trust Him, to rest in Him, and adore Him, till we prove Him thus. Then it is a settled question: our hope and trust are in God, as it is written, “who by him do believe in God.” Therefore the apostle does not say we are justified before God, though it be true, but it is God who justifies, that the heart might be brought to rest in God Himself. Paul, though righteous as to legal righteousness, had gone to the extreme extent of what sin really is: it was not a mere looseness of expression when he called himself the chief of sinners, for Paul in heart was the wickedest man that ever trod the earth; not, of course, guilty of immorality (as he says of himself, as touching the righteousness which is of the law he was blameless) “After the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee”; but he was the ardent enemy of Christ, and it was when he reached to the highest point of his wickedness, “being exceedingly mad against them,” that at that moment he was “separated unto the gospel of God.” He knew what grace was.

I will now rapidly go over, without entering into detail, what man is, and has shewn himself to be. Though cast out of paradise, God had borne with man, but at first left him to himself, though not without a testimony; but the result of leaving man to himself was such corruption and violence, that he must be destroyed from off the face of the earth. God put a close to his abominations by a flood.

The promise having been given as a witness that grace was the true source of blessing, the law followed, and it was broken. The prophets came next, and they were rejected, stoned, and slain. And last of all God sent His Son: Him the world killed. It was not merely that man had broken the law, and slain the prophets, but when the goodness of God came, they hated Him revealed in goodness. Well, Jesus prays for His murderers, pleading their ignorance, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”; as in the case of one who owed ten thousand talents, and, forasmuch as he had nothing to pay, his lord forgave him the debt. (And this is what I take to be the meaning of the parable, though it has a general application.) So the Holy Ghost takes up again and carries on this very intercession of our Lord, when forgiveness of sins is preached by Peter at Jerusalem, saying, “And now brethren, I wot, that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers … repent ye therefore and be converted.” And what was the result? Did they repent? No; not only had they killed the Prince of Life, but they now fill up the measure of their iniquity in stoning Stephen, thus rejecting the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the grace and goodness of God in the gospel of Christ glorified, as in His humiliation.

At this point it is that Saul of Tarsus comes out, and so mad against the followers of Christ that he was the very apostle of the enmity in the heart of man against the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the grace and goodness of God. But here God meets him in the way, and his mouth is closed as to goodness in man; for while all God’s means were used to bring man’s heart to return to Himself in blessing, Paul was found in the most active hostility to Him, being determined to put a stop to this

testimony of grace and goodness if he could. Then the Lord appears to him in glory in connection with the church, owning all the saints as Himself, “Why persecutest thou me?” — “for he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” Thus Paul sets out as being the leader of the actienve ergy of man in opposition to God, that he might be a perfect witness of the grace that overcame him, as he anew sets out on his way testifying that there is grace and forgiveness for one such as he. Everything that could have religiously sustained his heart was broken down when God met him by the way. Take conscience, for instance: outwardly he was blameless, yet thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. How terrible must it have been to Paul to find that his natural conscience, blameless as it was, had left him all wrong, as of no avail! We know that he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink, so terrible was the upsetting of his soul. Then take the law, his boast and glory as divinely given: it had been his ruin before God in self-righteous enmity to Christ. The religious teachers he had looked up to, the priests and Pharisees, and his own zeal, had only brought him into opposition and open rebellion against God. Everything in which his heart had trusted left him a mere sinner, naked in the presence of the glory of God, his enmity only the greater by that trust. Thus ended all means, leaving Paul a “child of wrath,” as he says, “even as others.”

Thereupon Paul starts, not from what he is, but from what God is; he starts as the Lord’s servant: “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? “He starts as a called apostle, separated unto “the gospel of God.” It is not merely the gospel of Christ, but the gospel of God. It is a wonderful

expression, as the gospel of God is the activity of God's love going out into a world of men as hopeless and bad as Paul had been; it is now dealing with man, through Christ, on the ground of what God is. The gospel of God is God's own good news in giving His Son to carry this message of mercy and grace to lost man, made effectual in His work.

The Jews accused the Lord of breaking the sabbath, the sabbath being the sign of the covenant between God and His people, and to be kept the seventh day, a rest connected with the first creation. God's rest is at the end of labour. It was founded in Israel on the principle of the law. Man's labour in righteousness gave him rest at the end. But in fact, when divine truth came in, we find in John 5:17 there was no sabbath for Christ in this world. Sin had come in, and there is no rest for God where sin is: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Thus He had come down where sin was, and He was working in the accomplishment of that grace, which gives a better rest to man. Paul comes in here as the servant, or slave, bound to the work: a bondman to Christ, separated unto the gospel of God; that was his business, and if he could further the gospel by making tents, of course he would continue to make them; but he was an apostle called to the gospel of God. And where God gives ministry, it is as the vessels of God's activity in grace, for the calling of sinners and the building up and edification of His saints.

It is very important to distinguish between teaching the church, and the testimony of grace to the world. The Old Testament is full of mercy; but even so there could yet be no proclamation of an accomplished work of redemption. But further, that is not the church (nor

indeed is the church the doctrinal subject in this epistle). It was what He had promised afore by His prophets in the holy scriptures. The church was not the subject of promise, but the “gospel of God” was: from the beginning it had been said, the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head. The Gentiles had not the promises, though there were special ones to the Jews. The promises of God were made to the second Adam, and not to the first; the promise in Genesis that the serpent’s head should be bruised was made to the Seed of the woman, which Adam was not. So it is said: to Abraham were the promises made, and to his seed; and that Seed was Christ. The promises, then, were entirely connected with Christ, who is the Seed in whom all these promises centre. The person of Christ, as we see here, is the great subject of the gospel even before His work, though we could have no part with Him without His work. This is of all importance, as God is now claiming subjection to His Son. There is not an infidel or a rebel, however great, who shall not bow the knee to Jesus; if in grace, it is salvation: but, if the heart does not bow to the grace, the knee must bow under the judgment.

In verse 3, “concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh,” the apostle is bringing out the double character of the Lord. In verse 1 we have the person of the Son as the subject of the gospel; then, secondly, as the seed of David according to the flesh, according to promise. Then Paul brings out definitely the character of the Son, “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” Thus we have the Son of God with divine power,

though clothed with humiliation. Then, again, we have the Son coming down in the midst of defilement with divine power, passing through it according to the Spirit of holiness. This was shewn through all His life by absolute separation from all defilement. He passed through the whole scene of evil untouched and unsullied by sin, though in contact with it, touching those in it all around, yet separate Himself. He touches the leper, who saw His power, but was uncertain of His goodness: and was He defiled? No! but in touching it He chases away the uncleanness without becoming unclean Himself, and none but the Son of God could do this. But His was perfect grace coming down into the defilement, banishing and dispelling it, without receiving it Himself.

But, besides sin and defilement in us, the manifested power of Satan was this—that he had the power of death, and this Satan had on man by the judgment of God Himself; for God had said, “In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shak surely die.” Thus man was under the power of him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and if the Son of God is to deliver man from under the power of Satan, He Himself must go down to his stronghold, this last citadel of Satan. He must Himself go down under the power of death, if He could not be holden of it, that He might “deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”; and He, the Son of God, feared it, as He piously should, as the judgment of God (Heb. 5); but He was heard in that He feared; He bore it as the judgment of God, but He broke all the bars by which Satan held us, and He has set us free. Satan committed himself entirely by putting his hand on the spotless person of the Prince of Life, who bore our sins; and in His rising from the dead,

the sins, and Satan's power, were all gone before God and for faith.

The resurrection shews the divine power of the Son of God. When Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" the Lord said, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." That is, all Satan's power over the first man manifested in death shall not prevail against it: for that is the meaning of the gates of hell. Man had been tried by every means— without law, and he was lawless: by the law, but he only brought forth wild grapes: but all this depended on the responsibility of man, not on the power of God. Satan prevailed against man by his lusts, and led him on to the second death. But if it is the Son of the living God who has entered into the conflict, and founded the church on His work and victory, the gates of hell, the power of death, shall not prevail against it.

The Spirit of holiness always displayed in life is demonstrated by the resurrection from the dead, and here observe that it is "from amongst," or "from out of," the dead. The twelve believed, as did Martha, in the resurrection of the dead, as there will be a resurrection of all the dead, good and wicked; but they were questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean; Mark 9:10. It is the coming in of God's own living divine power, breaking through the bands of death, and taking up those that are God's from amongst the wicked dead. This resurrection, realised in the power of the Spirit, is our present standing, though we still wait for the redemption of the body. The very same power, we learn in Ephesians, which raised Christ from among the dead, has wrought in us— "quickened us together with Christ."

The Son of God goes down in grace for us to the very place in which we were by sin, and by His own divine power breaks the bands of death, and takes us up from under its power, and places us, according to the efficacy of His own work, in the presence of God. Thus, all that my sin could do has been met by divine power and put away, rendering void of power him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. How marvellous the grace! The consequence is not merely that there ought to be holiness in us, but that there must be holiness in nature, though vigilance be needed to maintain it in practice.

How did Christ rise out of the grave? By His own divine power, as by the glory of the Father, and in the power of the Spirit; and it is the same divine energy which is the spirit of holiness in walk, raising me from the dead now in spirit, that is, the power of the new life in me, and by reason of which even the resurrection of my body will take place. All that He has done is mine, but I enter into it by virtue of a life which is a holy one. It is not merely a duty to be holy, but there is holiness in us, because we are partakers of justification, of the whole efficacy of His work, by means of a life which is essentially holy, for it is Christ's.

This is the gospel of God, that He, in the activity of His own love, in the person of Christ, has come down here, and walked in holiness where sin was, and gone down under the power of death, though He could not be holden of it, that He might deliver us from the power of him who had the power of death. I am now raised spiritually and morally by the very same divine power that will raise up my body. "By whom we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith," etc.

All will be called to bow to the revelation of Christ, who was dead and is alive again for evermore.

“Called saints,” or “saints called,” v. 7. It is the same principle here as the apostle called. We are saints called, thus shewing the grace of God, as it is not to us by birth or descent as the Jews, but it is all of grace. So Abraham was called, and chosen, and faithful. If we are called, it is not of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of the will of God; and we are bound to give thanks, in that “God hath saved us and called us with an holy calling.” What a very different thing it is in our souls, for what a different thought we have of God when we believe the activity of God’s love! It is not only that “God is love,” but that God is active in His love.

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Alas! we pass over these gracious words very lightly. The apostle felt what he said in the power of the Spirit; favour and peace from the Father and the Son. Mercy is only added when the epistles are addressed to individual saints, but when the saints are looked at as a whole, they are seen as the fruit of mercy shewn; being seen by the eye of God as under the influence and energy of the love and grace that had saved them: but as individual saints they need mercy every moment. The apostle looked at them as under the eye of a Saviour God, and he wished them to have the full manifestation of what was in the God that had saved them. All the effect of there being no cloud between them and God.

God is never called the God of joy, though He gives joy; but constantly the God of peace, and the apostle desires their peace from God should be undisturbed—having

perfect peace in Him in the midst of this whirlwind of passion; he desired for them all the effect of the consciousness of their position, all the affections suited to this relationship. If a child feels towards his father as towards a master, he does not know his position; if we have not unlimited confidence, we have not found our place. The saints in filial love will address God as their Father. In the government of the church it is the Lord Jesus we shall address; this distinction should always be marked. In all our petitions, failures, confessions, and need, we go as individuals to God as our Father; but in everything relating to church conduct, we go to Him who is the Head of the church. If we have not the unlimited confidence in God to go to Him with our very follies even, we do not know Him as “the Father.”

If Christ said, “It is my meat to do the will of him that sent me,” Paul could say, through grace, “whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son.” It is not service at all, if it be merely outward; unless we can say, “Of thine own we have given thee.” All true service must flow from communion with the source of service; it is no service if we are not drinking in Christ, and conscious that we are doing His will; if I should take up any service, without being confident that God would have me do it, there would be no power in it. Service then, if real, must flow from direct communion with God. We may go on in a course of action as a consequence of communion for a good while. Thus, for instance, we may compare the state of the Thessalonians with that of the church of Ephesus in Revelation. To the Thessalonians it is said by Paul, that he knows their work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope: here we see the three cardinal points— faith, hope, and charity, as springs of

work, labour, and patience; but not so in the address of the Lord to Ephesus—it was work, labour, and patience; but there was not the present spiritual power, which comes from God direct, therefore the candlestick was threatened to be removed. How often do our attempts at service flow more from thought of something we may have to do, than from direct communion with God! It then becomes, or is in danger of soon becoming, the mere activity of the flesh, and at any rate is the drudgery of duty without power, instead of serving with the spirit; what a comfort that all my life through I may be serving the Lord with my spirit!

This world is a wilderness, a labyrinth, but God is guiding us through it. When Israel were in the wilderness, was there any path for them? None! “They wandered in the wilderness where there was no way.” We read that Moses said to Jethro, “he might be to them instead of eyes.” No, says God, I will be as eyes to you; for as Israel departed from the mount a three days’ journey, the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them, to search out a resting-place for them, not merely to bring them at last into the land. Now, the place of the ark was in the midst of the camp, and they were to keep the charge of the Lord; but when Israel journeyed from Sinai, it went before them. Again, God says of Israel,” Though I have scattered them amongst the countries, yet will I be to them a little sanctuary in the countries; Ezek. 11:16. Is God less than this to us? No; He is leading us through this world’s labyrinth, where there is no path, no way but Jesus; for He is our only track in this wilderness of sin and sorrow; but what an unspeakable comfort to have such an One! Yet we need perfect dependence that we may discern the perfect path that

has in it the track of the Lord's own footsteps: to this end, flesh must be mortified, and the will subdued.

"Without ceasing I make mention of you in my prayers." See the apostle's wonderful energy with God, and this is one mark of spiritual power, the capacity of keeping up our interest in all saints everywhere, in our soul, in intercession for all saints in every place; and this leaves us in entire dependence on the will of God, for no real spiritual power ever takes us out of the place of waiting on God: so with Eliezer, he says, "Lord, let the damsel to whom I say, Let down thy pitcher," etc., "be the same thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac"; and when the woman had given him drink and his camels also, he does not yet say, Oh, here is the answer to my prayer, but he is still waiting on God, and, wondering at her, held his peace, to wit, whether the Lord had made his journey to prosper or not; and when the camels had done drinking, he said, "Whose daughter art thou?" and when he found she answered the description of that which to him was divine direction, as the word is to us, he bowed his head and worshipped the Lord. Success often takes us out of the place of communion, because it is our success when we do not acknowledge God in it. The faith which waits on God turns to God when the blessing comes, and the joy is much greater.

"I am not ashamed of the gospel; for it is the power of God unto salvation." God coming in, in power—this is the gospel character, it is complete, and it is of God; no mixture. The "wrath of God, moreover, is revealed from heaven"; not merely governmental wrath here on the earth, as bringing Nineveh against Israel, or carrying Judah to Babylon, but wrath from heaven. It is not yet

manifested, though it was seen to a certain extent in the deluge; faith sees it in the cross.

Now, it is the nature and character of God that is brought out to meet what man is. God now looks upon what man is, in the presence of what He is, in respect to the very perfectness of His nature, and the activity of grace that has brought out what man is. This can only shew man utterly a sinner. Is it claiming righteousness? No; for now man's righteousness is entirely set aside, as the ground of his standing before God. But we have God's righteousness made known, meeting the necessity which the proof of man's utter sinfulness brings before us, not something to grow up to righteousness, but perfect now. It is revealed from faith to faith, it is said, that is, faith is the principle on which it is revealed. God's righteousness, being a perfect and an existing thing, complete in itself, is revealed, and that not on the principle of man's working, but of faith, and so to faith; so that the man, be he who he may, that has faith, gets it. If it were given on the principle of human righteousness, the righteous man would have it, and the law be the rule; if on the principle of benevolence, the poor man would have it; but it is neither. It is on the principle of faith.

I would desire that our hearts might rest on this wonderful truth, the activity of God's love coming down into a world ruined by sin, and under wrath. God Himself is the rest, as He is the guide all the way; His divine favour and unchanging love and goodness accompanying and abiding with us all the journey through. There is no rest but in His own way. The more pains God has taken to set man right, have only proved the more that the tree is bad; the more you dig around a

bad tree, the more bad fruit it will produce. It is all God's working and God's righteousness, not of man's working nor man's righteousness, though that working of God will alone produce fruits of righteousness in man.

Chapters 2-4.

I take the close of chapter 3 as being the summing up, and application of the apostle's argument, drawn from the sin of the Jews and Gentiles; then in chapter 4 he passes on to another principle, as brought out in the testimony of Abraham and David. But in this first part of the epistle the apostle opens out man's need, and the way in which it had been met by redemption, as that on which alone the soul could rest. Having in chapter 1, from verse 18, gone through the horrible evil of the Gentiles and man generally throughout the world, and shewing that without any subsequent revelation, through the knowledge of God possessed by Noah, and God's dealings with men through the creation, God being to be understood by the things that are made in His eternal power and Godhead, they were left (chap. 1) without excuse, conscience itself telling them what was right and wrong, and that hence, as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, He gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts; for if a man is left alone of God, he always turns to the lust of his own heart. Thus God in judgment brought upon them, that as they had not discerned what became God, they should not be able to discern what became man.

It is God's way, when the light He gives is rejected, to give men up to blindness, and this giving up by God is an act of judgment on God's part; as these Gentiles, not liking to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them

over to a reprobate mind. It was so with the Jews; rejecting the testimony God had given them, God says by the mouth of the prophets “make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy,” etc.; of the Gentiles it is said, “who changed the truth of God into a he”; so of the professing church, fallen from the light, God says, “I will send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.” Thus we see, whether Jews, or Gentiles, or nominal Christians, the effect of man being given up of God—what man is when left to himself, and the judgment of God in his neglect or abuse of light. Natural light was given in the beginning in the testimony of creation, and man began with the knowledge of God as thus dealing with him; but men did not like to retain God in their knowledge. There is the pleading, too, of conscience, for every man has a conscience, distinct from grace. But conscience cannot bring us to God. Conscience is the sense of responsibility, united to the knowledge of good and evil, and this last part acquired in the fall. But we must remember, if the conscience becomes awakened, it is not life and peace, and therefore only drives us away from God, like Adam in the garden hiding himself from God.

As the Gentiles did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind. So the Jews, having been disobedient to God’s testimony, sentence is passed upon them by Isaiah seven hundred years before it was accomplished: “Make the heart of this people fat,” etc., for such is the patience of God; as Stephen also says, “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did [in the past dispensation], so do ye [in this dispensation].” Both guilty of the same sin, and according to Peter’s testimony of the witness given to

Jesus, those very things by which Christ was testified to have come from God, will be the very thing that will lead the Jews to receive the false Christ in the latter day. “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know,” Acts 2:22. Compare this with 2 Thessalonians 2:8, “Then shall that wicked one be revealed … with all power [miracles], and signs, and lying wonders.” Thus as the Jews rejected what God did in their midst by Jesus of Nazareth; so they will receive what Satan will do by that wicked one; and all this, as the apostle goes on to say, because they received not the love of the truth.

As in chapter 1:18-32; and chapter 2:1-16, all the Gentiles are brought in guilty, so, in spite of real privileges, the Jew: from chapter 2:17, and then from chapter 3:9-18, we find all are under sin—the Jew under law, as well as the Gentile without law. Both are alike equally guilty; for if the Gentiles be given over to a reprobate mind, the Jew is proved by his own scriptures, which he boasted belonged to him only, to be just as bad. Thus, there is none righteous, no, not one; there is no understanding; none that seeketh God, the will being gone wrong; blind in mind, and perverse in will, and guilty before God; not only as to the nature being sinful, but as slighting the testimony, rejecting the fight which God had from time to time revealed to them. But the God of judgment was there, and now it is proved that by the deeds of the law no flesh can be saved, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Thus we see how those under the law are brought under condemnation, as well as the heathen they despised; it is useless for a Jew to

attempt to get in by his own condition, for the law he boasted in condemns him. If it applied to him, it condemned him it applied to. The Gentiles have no right to put themselves under the law; but we all do so somehow or other; and as a process it may turn to good in the conviction of sin; but as a position, and if we stay in it, see where it brings us! “The Lord looked down upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek after God.” No; they have all gone out of the way; and the Jew learnt by the law which he claimed, and with reason, to belong to him only, that on his own ground he was utterly guilty, though the apostle does not here bring against them their hardness of heart in rejecting Christ; and thus both Jew and Gentile are alike thoroughly guilty, and every mouth stopped. Such is the end of man’s righteousness.

But now by grace all is changed. The righteousness of God without law is revealed, and the apostle then develops this truth very fully, as far as its principles go. In point of fact, this joins on to chapter 1:17, the intermediate verses giving the proof of what made God’s righteousness necessary. He states the nature of this righteousness in a direct and absolute manner, and in contrast with man’s. It is altogether on a different principle; it is righteousness, not even mercy, though the fruit of grace, but it is a righteousness without law at all; it is God’s righteousness, and who can give law to Him? Had it been man’s righteousness, law would have been the measure and principle of it; but being God’s righteousness, it is altogether on a different principle from law. As man stood in sin, God’s law only condemned him, and it cannot give life. Put a man under righteous obligation, and it is all over with him, because

man is a sinner. Man has a will (I speak practically, not metaphysically), and law brings it out; and man's will never submits, for it would cease to be a will if it did; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. God never meant righteousness to be by the law; it would have been cruelly mocking man, who is a sinner, to have proposed it to him. The law was given, that the offence might abound—not that sin might abound, for sin was there before the law was given; but it is not offence, or transgression, until there is a law; and thus it is that the law worketh wrath, for where no law is, there is no transgression.

It is not said there is no sin; but where there is nothing to transgress, there can be no transgression. Thus every mouth is stopped, and all the world becomes guilty before God. And now the righteousness without the law is manifested, not merely it exists, but it is manifested; it existed long before in the counsels of God, none being ever justified otherwise, but it was not manifested till the gospel was brought out and preached; therefore the apostle says, "to declare at this time his righteousness." No sinner ever stood, or ever could stand, in God's presence, from Adam downwards, save in God's righteousness; but it had not been manifested until now. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets." Thus the law and the prophets only shewed what God was going to bring in, but did it not in themselves; but the gospel of God on the contrary is founded on God's righteousness, and therefore it is manifested at this time, but witnessed by the law and the prophets; it was witnessed to, before it was manifested.

In chapter 3 we get all brought in guilty, and then it shews how we are to get into the presence of God. Can man that is a sinner approach God? No; nor can he make out a righteousness by law, by which he could; but then God's righteousness appears in its stead. Christ has been made a sacrifice for us, He has answered for all we have done in the old man, and as man now He is in the presence of God for us, and we are there in Him, in all the favour and acceptance in which Christ Himself is—always there as He is. This is how man gets the righteousness of God; but in chapter 3 only the former part is distinctly stated. The claims of God against the old man have all been met in Christ Jesus, and we are made the righteousness of God in Him. God's righteousness, though in fact including all, is yet more particularly viewed here as meeting the guilt of the old man. In the end of the chapter we have the answer to God's perfect demands. The sin, whether of Jew or Gentile, is put away by the blood-shedding of Jesus, and God's righteousness manifested in forgiving. This righteousness is now the starting-point of faith: we have met God here. But this shewed the righteousness of God in His patience with, and forgiveness of, the sins of Old Testament believers. The patience had been shewn of old. The work of Christ shewed the righteous ground of this patience. We, or they, are all fully justified by Christ's blood.

In chapter 4 we have another thing, resurrection in principle. Abraham believed God. This is faith in its groundwork. God is believed. Next, in its object, not only did he believe in the resurrection, but in the God that raised. So with us; we do not merely believe in Jesus, who rose from the dead, but in the God who raised Him:

the power that came in to give Christ, as man, a place before God, which was the plain witness to the value of His work, in putting away our sins.

In referring to Abraham, who had nothing to do with law, we find the double character of faith, its nature, and its particular object in the Christian; in the second character of justification, he says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” It is not here said that he believed in God, but he believed God. Such is faith in its subjective elementary character; we set to our seal that God is true; and that is how Abraham got his righteousness. It was not man’s working, but one that worked not. But the word of God reveals God Himself, and God in grace; hence, though there may be much struggling first, when we simply believe God, we believe in Him that justifies the ungodly, and of such David describes the blessedness.

But the character of our faith is carried farther here; the object is God who raised the dead. Our confidence is a righteous one: we believe on One who raised up Him who had been delivered for our offences—raised for our justification. But there is this difference between Abraham’s faith and ours. He believed in God’s power to fulfil His word. We believe that God has raised up Jesus after He had stood in our place as sinners. We have thus the resurrection of Christ applied to our justification. Yet in all this part of the epistle justification does not go beyond forgiveness, as chapter 4 plainly shews. Righteousness goes farther, but not what we have here. Here we have the active clearing away of all the guilt that attached to the deeds of the old man. This completes the work of grace for us, as responsible beings. The effect is, we have peace, stand in divine

favour, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God; we glory in tribulation by the way, for it is for our good, and we have the key to all in the love of God, shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given to us. Besides, we joy in God Himself, thus revealed in the perfectness of His grace towards us when we were sinners.

Having shewn thus the result of grace, in the beginning of chapter 5, in the way in which God justified each individual sinner, passing by sins, the apostle turns to the headship of the two Adams, and shews where the law came in. Our place is not in the first, not under the law, but in the second, according to the efficacy of the work He had wrought. What went before applied to our sins. Now he speaks of our nature and place.

I will summarily review his reasonings founded on this, before entering into detail. The disobedience of one made the many sinners—the obedience of One constitutes the many connected with Him righteous, and thus we are righteous by the work of another. In chapter 6 he goes on to notice that some will say, “Oh, if Christ has done all, it is no matter what I do: if it is righteousness without works, then we may walk as we like.” The answer is, not “That ought not to be,” but “That cannot be,” for we speak of death—I have part in righteousness by death. If the thing be real, I cannot live in what I am dead to, and that makes this become impossible; if I live, being thus dead, it is by being alive to God, in Jesus Christ our Lord. A new and holy life (for it is Christ in the power of resurrection) brings with it, not only hatred of sin, but deliverance; the same principle is applied to law in chapter 7. If I am dead to the law by the body of Christ, I am delivered from that

which had power over me while I was alive, that I may walk in newness of life.

We have the application of Christ's death and resurrection to man, for his justification before God, in the beginning of chapter 5; as dead to sin and consequently leading a holy life, in chapter 6; as dead to the law in chapter 7. The law, as Galatians also teaches us, has killed you, therefore it can do no more; its greatest work was, so to speak, to kill Christ, as in grace taking its curse; but He rose again, and we are in Him beyond the law—in Him who had borne its curse. Thereupon chapter 8 brings out the Christian in perfect liberty, in the last Adam of chapter 5 in virtue of His being risen. There is no condemnation for him who is in Christ. The Christian is necessarily viewed in Christ in chapter 8, but resurrection with Christ is not developed in Romans as a doctrine. The power of a new life in the Spirit is stated in verse 2; the condemnation of flesh on the cross, so as to put an end to that for faith and before God; our affections consequently shewing our life in Him. Being thus fully and freely justified and accepted in Christ, we are only waiting for the redemption of our bodies.

It is now not man's righteousness; if it were, it must be by the law and for those who have it. It is God's righteousness for all, and is upon all who believe, and no man can come in any other way; if it is God's righteousness, He cannot accept a Jew in preference to a Gentile, and as it is His "to all," it is as free for sinners of the Gentiles as the Jews. As regards the standing and peace of the soul, it is deeply important to see that while what we are ever struggling for is to get something in which we can come before God, it is God who comes

before us in the gospel with His, as our only righteousness; it is unto all, but upon those who believe. Mark here another thing that is connected with peace of soul: some may say, “I do not deny His divine righteousness, I believe it; but how am I to know that I have a share in it? Is it applied to me? I want it applied to my soul.” Well, God has applied it to you, if you believe, if, in the consciousness of your sinfulness, you have believed the record that God has given of His Son, then you have had it applied to your soul, for it is upon all them that believe; you are righteous. If you go on tampering with sin, or the world, God must work this out of you, that is true; and the same is the case, if there be much of the pride of self-righteousness. But the thing that is believed is what His Son is, and has done; if there is tampering with sin or the world in our souls, it prevents our laying hold of the truth; nor even if we have found divine righteousness, can we have the joy of the Holy Ghost in our hearts, for God must be real to us. But what we have to rest on is Christ’s dying for our sins, and the acceptableness of Christ’s person.

Many a Christian would be glad to rest, and, as they think, to rest there. But in the last thought they deceive themselves; they look for something better in themselves than they found; but that is not submitting to God’s righteousness, not resting in what Christ is. They have not learnt the value of the cross, nor its meaning. If they had learnt its value, they would not be trembling for fear; for how could they be trembling if they knew that their sins are put away? How could they be looking for good in themselves, if they knew that the cross was the final condemnation of all flesh in itself? You say you have no other confidence than the cross; that may be as

to your conviction of the truth, and you may feel your need of it in a certain sense, so as to know you cannot do without it. I suppose you do, or you would not look to it; but you have not yet learned the value of the cross, which purges the conscience by the absolute putting away of sin. And the secret of it is, that you still look for something besides sin in yourself; that is, there is still the looking for, still some hankering after, your own goodness lurking within; you do not think yourself as thoroughly bad as the cross proves you to be, for you are what needed it, you are sin in your nature as in your acts. God has condemned sin in the flesh, as needing that abhorrence on His part, and that is all you are in yourself, Rom. 8:3. You have yet to learn that it is the ungodly whom God justifies; you will have more than that, but you must come to that first. It is "being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"; it is not mere justification from sins, but actual deliverance—entire redemption. Thus, in the figure of Israel, it was a question between God and Pharaoh: "Let my people go." It is real positive redemption, not merely a forgiveness, but Christ has brought us out free from all the title Satan can have against us, or power he can have over us, according to the righteousness of God, and for Him. If I buy a slave, he is mine, and no one can have any right over him, and that is true with regard even to our poor bodies—they are to be free from Satan's power: God will have us entirely for Himself, by the work of Christ, and that according to His own holy nature and life, and His divine righteousness in judgment. Not even the smallest particle of our dust shall remain in Satan's kingdom, and this is why redemption is mentioned last in Corinthians 1:30: as it is brought out, too, in the similitude, as to

this, of Israel in Egypt. It was one thing for them to be screened from the destroying angel by the blood on the door-posts in Egypt, and another and very different thing for them to be brought clean out of Egypt by the passage of the Red Sea; thus being entirely delivered from the power of Pharaoh. And more than this: Christ has broken and destroyed all the power of death by which Satan held us, and taken him captive whose captives we were, and made us, who were Satan's captives, the vessels of God's power and testimony against Satan. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness." Here we have the connection of the blood of Christ with God's righteousness. It has been declared. It rested only in promise until Christ came in the flesh; it was not manifested till then: so that like Adam, Abel, or Job, they rested on the promises of righteousness, because the blood was yet to be shed. But now it is declared in having been fulfilled, in that Christ sits at the right hand of God, or rather, to confine myself to this epistle, that He is risen. And there is an amazing difference between resting on the promise (though this is most blessed) and on a fulfilment. A man in prison with a promise that his debt shall be paid is no doubt happy; but it is not the same thing as walking at liberty with the knowledge that it has been paid.

It is not forbearance now, but accomplished salvation, God's own righteousness declared. Can He forbear with that? The time of forbearance was in the time of the Old Testament saints; then God was forbearing, because of what He was going to do, and has proved His righteousness in doing it by the death of Christ. But that is not our condition. We have God's righteousness at this

time, this present time. He is not speaking here of what is past before Christ's death, but of the fact of righteousness, and our present state of conscience, of the better thing God has provided for us, as regards our standing before Him. For if I sin, I do not want a prophet to come and tell me my sin is just put away, I can say I know the blood has been shed; therefore I know as a present thing that every sin is put away. It is a settled question. We can add much more even; because, though the fact is assumed of our being in Christ, and His resurrection mentioned in chapter 8, the subject of this epistle is Christ's death and resurrection, as justifying and delivering us, we can speak of being with Him. The Ephesians looks at us as dead in sin, and quickened with Him, and sitting in heavenly places in Him. Colossians takes up both, only it does not go on to our sitting in heavenly places in Him; but sets us as risen and looking up to heaven where He is. It is such a righteousness, that He, who accomplished that through which it was to be revealed and made good, has, in virtue of what He has done, sat down at the right hand of God; and our life is in Him there. Abraham could not say, "I am one with a man at God's right hand," for Christ was not there as man then. But the believer in Christ can say so; for as surely as the first Adam was turned out of paradise, so surely has the last Adam entered heaven, and that as man, in the glory He had with the Father before the world was; and I am as sure of my place in Christ, as of my place in Adam.

Well, then, it is such a work as God recognised in righteousness, and such an one as has fully satisfied God —nay, more, has glorified Him, as indeed it must have done, to satisfy Him in divine righteousness. Still, we

can say it has glorified Him. See John 13:31, 32; and 17:4, 5. As regards the blood, He is just to forgive. It is His own righteousness which is upon the believer, and He must own it; and here too is the resting-place of faith. This is justice; but the opening of my heart is under the sunshine of grace at the outflowing of love. To see ourselves perfectly cleansed makes us hate sin, as a man who is thoroughly clean will not like to get a spot on his garment; while one who is already defiled will not care about getting a little more so. When the blood was put upon the lintels of the door-posts, it was to keep the judgment out, and God passed over; for had He come in, He must have judged them as they deserved, for they deserved judgment as much as the Egyptians, nay, more, for they knew better. Therefore it was grace keeping God out as a righteous judge, and according to His righteousness; but at the Red Sea they were to stand still, and see the salvation of God. It was God overriding every barrier, coming in and taking them completely out of the place of judgment and bondage, and bringing them to Himself. While the one was keeping God out, the other was bringing God in, or rather bringing them to God.

As an ungodly man I am justified by the blood; but as a Christian I am accepted in Him. But many, many Christians keep outside; looking at the cross only as an object of hope, they have not entered into God’s presence by it. Has the cross then left me outside? No; it has saved me from judgment, and I have entered into God’s presence by it, and therefore value it. How many do we see as sinners trembling at the foot of the cross, feeling their need of it, but getting no farther!

We are not under law as innocent beings, for man is a sinner, and the law cannot allow of even a lust; then where is the use of giving the law to man that is a sinner? What is the use of my giving a righteous measure to a man who is unrighteous? What the use of my giving a true measure to one who uses fraud in selling his goods, but to teach him where he is wrong? So God never gave the law to man to make him righteous, but to convict him and shew him where his sin is. Man may abuse the grace, to continue in sin; but that does not alter the nature of God's righteousness. If a law is given to man already a sinner, it can only be to make him know himself a sinner.

"Is he the God of the Jews only?" He will justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith; that is, the Jews who sought righteousness, obtained it only on the principle of faith; and the Gentiles, inasmuch as it was on that principle, possessed it through the faith that they had. Do we then make void the law, or more properly, law? No; we establish law, not Moses' law, but the principle of law. If a thief is hanging on a tree, is that making void the law? No; so far from making it void, hanging establishes it. But if after the punishment he rose, the law would have inflicted its penalty, and he would be beyond its reach. So then Christ died, and He established the law, and faith comes in and says, So far from making void the law, when Christ died for my sins, He established the law. But that does not put me under it: if under it I am lost, not merely as a sinner, but by the law itself. Nothing establishes the law like the death of Christ.

The Gentiles having been proved lawless, chapter 3, gives the Jew under law, condemned out of the law.

Christ was under the law; He kept it, and died under its curse. And is He under it now? No; He is dead to the law, and risen from the dead. I am the sinner He died for; He has borne the curse, and it is all gone, and it has lost all power to touch me, for I am one with Christ, I stand in Him, in the presence and favour of God, as dead and risen again in Christ. He gave all His sanction to the law—suffered it, if you will.

In chapter 4, in referring to Abraham and David as believing God, he then goes on to shew the ground on which Abraham gets the promises. The blessing belongs to me in uncircumcision, as righteousness was reckoned to him in uncircumcision, and that on the principle of faith, thus stopping the Jew's mouth, and hence to the Gentiles. Then in David we have the same thing, "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord will not impute sin." The law on the contrary worketh wrath. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of the faithful, before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead. The difference between us and Abraham is this: He believed God was able to perform; we believe He has raised up Christ from the dead. The deliverance has been effected, the power shewn, as well as our sins been put away. He was delivered for our offences. Was it effectual? He is raised again for our justification. All is complete and accepted, and Christ as man has left the dead—is out of and past all the consequences of sin; for judgment itself He has borne for us.

Beloved, in a day like this, what a thought it is for us that we are set in God's righteousness before Him! His righteousness has set aside all man's reasonings, as the

rising sun not only dispels the darkness, but causes even the stars to vanish because of its brightness. When Christ is first revealed to the soul it is always humbling, because it displays what it really is before God, and brings the conscience into play, while the heart mourns its having despised and rejected such an One. I do not say that the affections may not be found towards Christ without this; but there must be sooner or later such a revelation of what Christ is, as to shew us what we are; and it is that which breaks down what is inside, foolish and vain desires, self-will, sinful thoughts and feelings, and everything that is the opposite of Christ, thus shewing us not only that we have committed sins, but that we are sin. Then He reveals to us the unclouded favour of God into which we are brought, according to the love which sought us, and gave His Son for us, and brought us there in righteousness.

Chapter 5.

How the heart must rejoice in the wonderful way in which scripture is made so plain, as to all that is of greatest importance to our souls! While our minds might be wondering and reasoning about many things that may be, scripture is simple and definite as to what is; although there are depths in it which we cannot fathom. All the simple truths which are necessary to our finding forgiveness and joy, being at peace with God, are contained in this chapter, as the result of what we have been already considering. The general subject of the epistle shews how God and man can be together—how man can come in peace to God. The object of the epistle is not to bring out truths connected with the church as such, but the relationship of individual souls with God.

In chapter 3 we saw the way in which the blood satisfied God, to save us from judgment. Christ came down and made propitiation for our sins in His blood, and having gone through all that sin deserved, He rose from the dead, and entered, an accepted man, into the presence of God; and now all that was His by right is made ours in Him. At the close of chapter 3 the instruction as to the blood, as the ground of acceptance, is finished; and the epistle goes on with the result of this, and passes to the resurrection of Christ as God's public seal on the work so far.

Chapter 4 shews righteousness imputed through faith, but identifies it thus far with forgiveness; Abraham believed God, who could—we in God who has—raised up Jesus. Having exhibited the intervention of God in power in His love to bring Christ up out of the place in which He was for us, and so set us before God in righteousness, according to the efficacy of that which He has wrought (proved in the place He holds in resurrection) we have thus peace with God. We are indeed sitting together in Christ in heavenly places, but this is Ephesian truth, not entered on here; only we are said to live by Him, and it is assumed we are in Him. We stand in perfect favour, and rejoice in hope of glory.

This chapter 5 follows out the subject of our acceptance, as founded on the death and resurrection of Christ, shewing fully our condition before God. This, as founded on what precedes, closes with verse 11, and then begins quite a new subject; the contrast of our connection with the first and last Adam. This latter part treats of sin, not of sins; of man's disobedience, and one Man's obedience. Chapter 4:25 is properly in connection with the first eleven verses of chapter 5.

Remark, that it is not said, He was raised because of our justification, as is often said, and it is in a certain aspect a truth, but here it is, “for our justification “; and the next verse shews this, for God never separates justification from faith. We cannot have justification without having our souls brought into living connection with God by the exercise of individual faith. The first result of this faith will be peace with God; the second, we have access into the grace, that present divine favour wherein we stand; and third, we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. All the past connected with the old man, all our sins and offences being put away, and a new place given before God, instead of the judgment we deserved, there is perfect peace. Secondly, we have present personal introduction into the full favour of God, but not all yet in possession; therefore we rejoice in hope. Christ has borne all that deserved judgment, and entirely left our sins behind as regards the believer, who can never come into judgment before God for them, although of course there will be the Father’s chastening for sin. But it is impossible that judgment can be the portion of those whose sins Christ has wholly borne away, entering and placing them, in virtue of it, in a new place of righteousness before God. As impossible as it is that Christ’s work should be inadequate, or that God should punish the same sin twice over, so impossible is it for God to punish the sins of those who believe. If any one had to be shut out of heaven, so to speak, it must have been Christ, because He had taken the sins; but He was accepted, received up to glory; therefore the matter must be settled for me, if I believe; Heb. 9:27, 28. He did not hold back: our sins in all their horribleness were laid upon Him (as on the day of atonement the high priest confessed the sins of the people), when judgment was

fully passed upon Him. The judgment of my sins has all been settled between the all-seeing God and His spotless Son. There we have not a hope merely, but settled peace. “He by himself purged our sins, and sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.” He must have failed, or else I have perfect peace; and I know He did not fail. Romans 5:1. The reference to faith here often deceives people, who would make their faith the object, and so turn back upon themselves for something to give them peace. Peace never rests upon experience. There will be experience, but peace is the answer of God to all the exercises of my conscience. I cannot trust my own heart, but I can trust God’s heart, and it is in believing what this is that I find peace. The more Christ is worthy of being loved, if I bring my own selfishness into it, the more horrible must it be to God: “as dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour.” I cannot trust my own heart or its feelings, for it is deceitful above all things; but I can trust Christ’s—He has never deceived me. True, I shall have experiences—must have them, but I am not justified by experiences: it is the answer of God to them that gives peace. There may be joy at times, when there is not settled peace, but it rests on feeling. There is a joy which flows from a knowledge of forgiveness of sins, and this is justly called peace. But the solid security of the soul flows from the second subject of this epistle, beginning verse 12, not that Christ died for our sins, but that we have died with Him. Peace means that which is settled. Faith looks at its object, not on itself, and through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are not called on to believe that we do believe, but to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, by whom we have

access, and are brought into perfect present favour, every cloud that could hide God's love removed, and can rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. "Thy favour is better than life, therefore I can praise thee while I live"; so that in the midst of wilderness weariness we can rejoice. There is a striking description in Revelation 4 of the scene in heaven—the twenty-four elders seated on their thrones in the presence of God revealed in this Sinai character. When terrible judgments are about to fall on the earth, they are sitting in perfect peace; and when it is said, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," instead of it making them tremble and fear, "they worship him that liveth for ever and ever."

"Rejoicing in hope of the glory of God." How could I think of being there, if it was not all of grace? He has not only given us blessings, but associated us with the Blesser. "The glory thou hast given me, I have given them." Here is the Christian position as such, and then all brought out: for the past, the works of the old man, peace; for the present, favour; for the future, glory. What more do I want? What more can I have? Yes, there is more, "not only so"; there are present realities for the saint to learn in the wilderness— tribulation. The more faithful the saint is, the more trouble he will have; the more blessings he has, the more trial, because there is much to be removed that would hinder the blessing when given. What need, then, in all the tribulation of the way, to know that my peace is settled; that the matter of my justification is a finished thing! Else, when I come into the trial, I shall be likely to think, How can I suppose now that I have God's favour. All seems against me, and I shall not be able to "glory in tribulation."

But see what the result of tribulation is— “tribulation worketh patience.” I need my will to be broken, I shall expect to get a thing and never have it; I may have to cry to God three weeks, and fast, as Daniel: I have to learn patience, and in it learn the rashness of my heart that would expect everything at once. And so “patience works experience.” A man in earnest to do right will, if his will be at work, be in a hurry, but he will have to find out that he must wait for God’s help, as Moses had to do, who kills an Egyptian in his haste without God’s bidding, and Pharaoh hearing of it, off he goes. He has, in blessed true-heartedness, chosen to leave the court of Pharaoh’s daughter, where he had been brought up, and to take his place with the afflicted brickmakers. But though sincere and devoted, and with a right intention, giving up the high position in which providence had placed him, his flesh had to be broken down, and this was through forty years’ tribulation in the wilderness, keeping his father-in-law’s sheep. He was learning experience, and experience works hope; because what hindered and dimmed the hope is broken away by the process; earthly hope has died away, and the heavenly become more real and bright; and because in it I learn what God is. Moses had more knowledge of what the people were to be delivered for, when he went to Pharaoh by God’s sending; he knew nothing of the Canaan they were to go to when he slew the Egyptian.

“Hope maketh not ashamed.” In learning experience it may be I struggle against God; but we shall find it is of no use to struggle in tribulation against God’s hand, for He will hold us there until we submit; but in the end it will cause me to hope, “because the love of God is shed abroad in my heart.” This gives me the key to all the

tribulation, and enables me to glory in it. It is the fruit of God's own love. I confide in Him. How do I get this? By the Holy Ghost which is within me, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." It is not mine but His, God's love shed abroad; God, who is love, is in me, God's own love: this brings us back to a strength of hope which nothing can shake. Notice, it is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who maketh intercession for us.

A man may say in the face of all this, But suppose I do not feel it? Well, then, you are going back from faith, and looking to your feelings. How do I know that I have it? Am I perfect? No; the love is enjoyed within, but God has graciously put the proof of it without me; I know it, because I believe that Christ died for the ungodly. I am simply an ungodly one and have no strength at all, no feeling at all, and Christ died when I had no feeling at all. Christ died when-1 had no strength, and could do nothing at all. The greatest thing in heaven was given for the worst thing on earth, a sinner. I am a sinner, therefore Christ died for me. "for scarcely for a righteous man would one die." This is what distinguishes God's love from man's: while man must have some motive on which to act, something to draw out his love, God's love, on the contrary, springs from Himself; for God could find no motive in us, we were hateful.

How different is the Holy Ghost's reasoning from that of the natural man, or even it may be of the quickened soul, who, judging of God by himself, would say, He must judge me, for I know I deserve it! But "God commendeth his love … much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." The Holy Ghost reasons downwards from what God is in

grace, to the full effect of that grace; not upwards as man does, from his responsibility to what God will be. The Holy Ghost unfolds what God is, to meet the wants of my soul. True it is, the sinner deserves judgment, he needs not merely to be made better (that will not do), he wants a Saviour. Here is reasoning God will allow, He will allow it till we have got a Saviour; but here, when the Holy Ghost reasons from what God has done for the sinner, it is quite another thing.

It is much harder to learn that we are without strength than that we are ungodly. If a dead Christ is made a Saviour, a living Christ will be a friend to you. A dying Christ for you (the weakest thing, as it appears in nature, though it was God's strength), and now how will He not do all you want of Him in His life? If He died for you when your sins were on you, how much more will He care for you now your sins are gone! A living Christ cannot be to destroy you, if a dying Christ has saved you (mark, not only the power of the argument, but its grace in taking away all torment from the heart, for "fear hath torment").

Verse 11. "Not only so, but we also joy in God," not only joy and happiness for ourselves in our security and in what He has given, but we can joy in God. We first rejoice in the things given, but do not rest here, we rejoice in Him who gives them, and delight in the things that God is in Himself. He is holy; He is love; He is great in goodness. I can boast in Him who has so loved us, and say what a God I have, what a God to me. Holiness would naturally terrify us: but we are in the light, and we can sit down with joy in the presence of Him who is the source of all our blessings.

If my will is not broken, it is true I cannot joy in God, I cannot even joy in tribulations; because He has to deal with me in such a way as to break my will, and we never like that process; but afterwards, when we are walking with Him, when He has broken it down, we can joy in Him. And so if I stray in practical walk, I do not doubt my salvation, but I cannot joy in God, though we know joy is there; we only joy in God when walking with Him. If I stray I can reflect about the joy, but I must take a double step in getting back: I must judge the sin according to the judgment of sins on the cross, where the sin I have committed is put away, and return to God's unchanging grace, before I can again joy in God.

This closes the whole subject of our sins, and God's justifying us from them by the death and resurrection of Christ, and the blessed fruits which flow from it, which, as to the revelation of God, go higher than the demonstration of my state in Christ, which follows to the end of chapter 8. The Holy Ghost is going to shew in whom we get our place before God, and draws now the contrast between our headship in the first and in the last Adam, thus laying a great foundation for the principles He is going to bring out, and in which, having treated our sins and individual responsibility, He treats the question of sin, and the nature common to us all.

Verses 13-17 are in a parenthesis, and the notice of this makes the passage clear; read verse 18 in connection with verse 12. He heads all up in the obedient Man and the disobedient man. There is no longer the distinction between the Jews and Gentiles as families, nor even between man and man, each one of whom has his own sins and responsibility, but the living ones are all headed up in Christ, the unbelieving ones not, but in Adam only.

We have no allusion to the bride, or union of that character here, but it is the individuals all seen in their Head. We get then the doctrine of these two men, from verses 12-18, sources of life to all connected with them, and the obedience of one, and the disobedience of the other, constituting us righteous or sinners, though each of us may have added his own sins.

But before turning more particularly to that, we will look at the contrast of grace with the law, of which the whole passage treats: “until the law sin was in the world,” but the times of this ignorance God winked at, inasmuch as He did not treat with them as breakers of the law, when there was no law; but when there was law, they were governed by the law, and therefore Israel had the rod held over them, they were to be chastened for breaking the law, and banished ultimately into captivity. But the Gentiles have sinned without law, and He will judge the secrets of men by Christ Jesus; law never made sin, the sin was going on all the time from Adam to Moses, but law made the transgression. The sign of sins was present when there was no law, for death was there. My child may have a bad habit of running about the streets, but if I command him not, it is another thing, it is disobedience then, but before it was only a wrong thing that needed to be corrected. Though not after the similitude of Adam’s transgression; that is, though not disobedience to a positive commandment men are sinners still, though they have not broken a given law. (It is a quotation from Hosea 6:6, “They, like Adam, have transgressed my covenant.”) Sin was always there, death was always there to prove it, but law was not always there. “Imputed,” in the phrase “sin is not imputed where there is no law,” is a different word from

“imputed” for righteousness, and the like. It signifies a positive existing act reckoned to the account of a person, as in Philemon I:18.

The argument in this passage is, you are not going to shut up God to the Jews: sin was in the world before Moses, and the sin is not larger than God. If sin had been there God must go there. Christ did not come only for those under law; we must go up to the two heads, Adam and Christ, and so take in those who sinned without law, even between Adam and Moses. Grace overrides it all, “law entered that the offence might abound” —you (Jews) have added offence to offence, you need it all the more, for you have been guilty of positive transgression, but the free gift is of many offences. Verse 17. If God comes in, you will reign in life, not only sin having reigned, now life will reign, but you will reign in life. God’s heart comes in, and it is greater in its effects than all the evil there has been. Verse 18. See the generality of all this upon all to condemnation, not in result, but in desert, for grace comes in to deliver.

By one righteousness the free gift came towards all, not in the sense of application, the meaning in each case is to or towards all (Greek eis), not upon all (Greek epi). As the one offence did not rest in its effect on Adam only, but run over to all, so the effect of the one work of righteousness did not end in Christ, but passed on toward all, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” Verse 19. When it is a matter of application, it is the “many,” not “all,” that is, the many respectively connected with each head, therefore I can go to all to preach the gospel—to every creature, saying to the sinner, the blood is on the mercy-seat; but to the

believer I can say, You are righteous, “so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

What comfort there is in the simplicity of scripture!

In the next chapter we get, as the certain effect of this newness of life, the principle of death and resurrection brought forward. But if you do not see the need of your having righteousness in Christ you do not know yourselves, you do not know the holiness of God’s heart, and the unholiness of your own. Christ’s death may be considered as in itself glorifying God, apart from its results; but we have the double effect or aspect of the death of Christ shewn in the two goats, one of which was the Lord’s lot, and the other was for the bearing away into a land of forgetfulness the sins of the people; the first was for the glory of God, the second for the sins of the sinner, in the conscience of what he had done—both were needed. I have sinned, says the awakened conscience; but all my sins were laid on Christ, says the believer.

Verse 20. The entering in of law was that the offence might abound; wherefore the law? not to make sin abound, but to make sin exceeding sinful, and that the offence might abound, “but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,” and abounding grace has been shewn, for God gave His own well-beloved Son: and sin was suffered to rise up to its full wickedness, even in putting Christ to death, and then to shew how powerless sin is in the presence of God’s grace, that very thing, in which its greatest evil was shewn as hatred against God, is that which puts it all away; God’s grace rolls over it all, yet thus in righteousness. He has thus shewn the utter impotency of sin in His presence.

It is not said righteousness reigned: if it had, it would have been for the eternal condemnation of all (righteousness will reign when He comes in judgment), but now grace reigns through righteousness, grace goes on in spite of all the neglect in men's hearts to it—it reigns; it does not give up its ways and purposes; grace reigns over sin, man is unable to get the mastery over Christ's love but Christ's love overcomes man— it overcame everything that lay in the way of His fulfilling His Father's will, and His obedience overcame everything; grace reigned on the cross, yet righteousness was there; grace reigns in the subjection of our hearts—where sin did reign, grace reigns. Grace means love working where there is evil. How? By the obedience of One: hence, it is through righteousness.

Then if there is the reign of grace in the heart, there must be practical holiness, a righteousness consistent with it; if God's love works in the heart, it is to produce in it something like Himself. His love is such as has never been seen before in heaven or on earth. His perfect love and grace, and righteousness bring out what God is, Christ is grace reigning: and God has the upper hand even as to our sins, and has put them away.

Chapter 6.

We get in this chapter the practical application of the great principle of which the apostle has been speaking at the end of the preceding chapter, namely, our connection with the second Adam, as previously with the first. We shall see that it is practical in its nature, and we shall do well to see the double aspect of it; the power of practice and the real groundwork of that power. Liberty is always the ground on which grace sets us, and

liberty is the only ground of the Holy Ghost's power. Liberty is that to which we are called, it is not slavery, even unto holiness, but liberty always, but that liberty death to sin. The apostle first sets forth the ground simply and clearly, and then proceeds to the fruits, for there is actual righteousness which bears fruit. As He says, "Now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

There is wonderful depth and value in this chapter, as there must be in that which comes from God. This practical righteousness does not merely produce a fruit down here, that is man's thoughts, and man's thoughts end always with himself; but flowing from Christian life, as we shall see, and walking in the path suited to it here below, it frees from obscuring lusts, and tends to purify the heart practically, so that we see God. It has fruit unto holiness. The daily details of a Christian's life have thus the deepest importance, not only as doing right, but that this produces fruit that goes up in holiness to God, leads to a state of soul in which God is known and enjoyed, the soul being set apart for Him.

All that comes from God must go back to God again: so in the meat-offering—the frankincense which was laid on the meat-offering was burnt, and the savour of it all went up to God: the priest might eat of the meat-offering, but the sweet savour of all ascended up to God; just as Christ Himself came down from God, His whole hfe down here being one continued savour rising up to God, and at the end He offered up Himself, a sacrifice well-pleasing to God. The reality of the fruit of righteousness is that it is living to God, as the apostle says, "Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children,

and walk in love, as Christ hath loved us, and given himself an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." This is Christian morality, it is God's nature in man. Here, however, it is only seen as a fruit or effect—the divine life coming down from God, to God it must return, and where this is wanting, it is all nothing.

All the value of an action is in the motive. Fruit will be manifested; but it is not so much what a man does, as his motive for doing it. Even in nature, two men may do the same thing from very different motives; the motive of the one being himself and his own pleasure, will be evil; while the other, being the good father of a family, and doing it for their good, his motive will be good; it is in the motive of our ordinary actions that we have to be continually judging ourselves, that we be not judged of the Lord. The saint, in judging himself, must be grieved when he sees so many other things come in and mix up with that which he presents to God; self comes in, and like the dead flies, spoils the savour of the ointment. It may not be seen by others, but our own hearts before God know how very much of self comes in, making the ointment send forth a bad savour, yet we know God graciously and lovingly accepts all our service through Christ, being a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The great principle laid down in chapter 3 is that the blood meets our sins.

Chapter 4 brings out faith in the God who had come in, in power, and raised the One who was under death—raised Him from the dead. "Believing on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." Christ was put to death in the flesh; looked at as man, we see Him going down into death, and a divine power coming in, and

raising Him up again. It is precious to our souls to observe in scripture the same divine power is attributed to the three Persons, thus giving us a proof of the Trinity being engaged in the work. The Lord Jesus said, "Destroy this temple (this spake he of the temple of his body), and I will raise it up in three days"; and again, "Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father," Rom. 6:4. And He was "quickened by the Spirit."

In the former part of chapter 5 we get faith applied to justification; the conclusions from Christ's being delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, and the results of this are given: we have peace, present favour, and hope of glory; we rejoice in tribulations, for God's love is shed abroad in our hearts, and finally, are able to joy in God.

Then comes, beginning with verse 12, the question of sin in our nature, where all heads up in Adam and Christ, and we see that the law was brought in by the bye, when man was already a sinner, with no thought of producing righteousness, but that the offence might abound and so manifest man's sin. The law is righteous, and comes in, convicting of unrighteousness those to whom it was given, because those to whom it was given could not keep it.

Man's only ways of being with God are, to be innocent, or to be saved. If a man is innocent, he does not want the law; Adam could not have known what it meant. If it had been said to Adam, "Thou shalt not lust, thou shalt not steal" —how would it have applied? Whom was he to steal from? But the law supposes lust to be there, therefore says, "Thou shalt not lust." The commandment

which forbids, supposes the forbidden thing to be there, or the tendency to it, where the thing prohibited is a sin in its nature. The fruit of the tree was in the garden, which was the very thing prohibited to Adam; but till Satan got hold of Eve, there was no lust to eat of it. “Thou shalt not eat of it,” was a simple test of obedience, but even then the object was before them. A right rule only proves a fraudulent thing to be fraudulent, it does not make it right.

It is impossible for a man to be saved by the law, as the law supposes the presence of sin; an innocent person does not know what sin is, but man by the law is addressed as a sinner, that he might be saved by grace; but God having now come in, He could not confine Himself to those merely under law, but extends His grace to all—grace is the only ground He can be upon. Again, the law was not given till four hundred years after the promise. The promise was first.

In chapter 5:19, we have the two headships brought out in their results. By one man’s disobedience, etc., and, note here, all are thus alike, the individual’s sins do not come into account, though they do in judgment, for we are judged according to our works. But here, one man’s, disobedience made us sinners, and one Man’s obedience makes us righteous. That seemed to make it no matter how we lived; but the subject of chapter 6 is just to meet such a thought as this. The perverseness of the flesh will turn the law to a different purpose from that for which God gave it, and grace for a different end from that for which God bestowed it. The law that was given to convict man of sin, man takes up to make a righteousness of his own out of it; and grace that was really given to make man holy, man turns into

licentiousness. Though it is true that souls were quickened before Christ came, by virtue of His divine power to quicken whom He would, yet we get this great fact, that Adam became a fallen man, a sinner, and lost, before he was the head of the fallen family. So Christ finishes the work for righteousness before He becomes the head of the redeemed family.

We have not only come into the position of fallen Adam, but we have got a nature that likes sin; and where there is the life of Christ there is a nature which loves holiness: this is the argument of the apostle. But if a man naturally likes unholiness, how is he to get rid of this? His reply is, “How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? “It is not an argument as to what we ought to be. That which forms the groundwork of Christian life is that we have died with Christ. It is never said to man, You ought to die to sin. The believer is placed in Christ. How? In a Christ who has died and is risen. That life which I have in Christ is after Christ is dead and risen again; thus I have life in a Christ who has died (that is where I exist), in whom I have died unto sin, for if we are made partakers of justification through Him, it is because we are made partakers of His death. But, if, as regards the old sinful Adam, we are made partakers of death—have our part in and by it—we cannot live on.

To follow more precisely the apostle’s argument: If I am a Christian, justified by Him, it is that I have part in His death. It is my very profession. I have been baptised to His death. But if I have died to sin to be made righteous, I cannot live in it because I am righteous. You have died unto sin in Christ. There is more than that when we look into it, as to detail: the blood of atonement was put upon

the tip of the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the great toe of the right foot of the priest, thus shewing that we are not only saved by the blood, but that nothing was to be allowed in thought, word, or deed, discordant with its holy claim. There is that which becomes a Christian, but that is not what is brought out here, but the truth of our having part in His death, so that we are to reckon ourselves alive to God through Him, not through the first Adam in his flesh.

How have you got your place, your life, your character in Christ, but through a dead and risen Christ? Well then, if I am dead, I am not still alive. Hence it is that the exhortation is never to us, to die, for we have died with Christ. How then can a man live in that to which he is dead? It cannot be. If I am dead to sin I cannot live in sin, God forbid! There is putting to death, for practically we are to mortify our members, that is power, but we are never told to die to sin. You may try to die to it, but it will not do. It is still there. But the cross of Christ has for faith killed your sin, when He put your sins away.

We first get a new life and a new nature, and then we can begin to kill the members of the old nature, reckoning oneself dead, otherwise it is hopeless. I can now deal with this old thing as not me, for now I have a new thing which is me, therefore I do not admit that old thing to be me at all. I have for ever done with it, having got this new thing by which the old is overcome. In this chapter 6, the apostle is speaking of our liberty, as scripture always addresses the believer as dead with Christ.

What Christ have you a part in? Not one living on the earth before death, but in His death, though He be now

alive again. “Buried with him by baptism unto death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Thus we get the glory of the Father as all engaged in the resurrection of Christ, and in result, as the measure of our walk down here. “By the glory of the Father.” I can rest upon that expression, because it is that which can feed the heart, for Christ, as man, is brought out by and into the full glory of the Father, and that which meets the subtlety of the world’s pretension (for the world had rejected Him), and the subtlety in our hearts, for all that leans to what obscures that, is the old man, which would have, not that which is of the Father, but of the world.

The Christian is fed and settled by what shews the perfection of Christ, as raised by the glory of the Father. There is not a single thing that was connected with the glory of the Father that was not made good by the death and sealed by the resurrection of Christ. Take death, for instance, God’s righteous judgment, but the ruin of His creature, and the present display of Satan’s power. We had all come under the power of death. Divine power comes in, and raises Him who, in grace towards us, went down under death, and by raising Him makes good God’s judgment, while it sets aside what it was exercised in, and destroys him that had the power of death, that is the devil. There was the power of God, the love of the Father shewn out besides, for it was the Son who was there; and yet His righteousness, too, for Christ had fully glorified Him there, where it would seem impossible, made sin—and in death, its wages—for us. Was ever the love of the Father drawn out in like manner, as in the resurrection of Christ? Never! There

was in Christ's death a fresh motive for the Father's love, in the Son's sacrificing Himself to shew forth the Father's glory. Then the Father's own glory was concerned in it, because it was the Father's own Son, one with Himself, who was under death; therefore the Father must come in and raise Him up, for His own glory.

Then also the righteousness of God is concerned. The world was to be convinced of righteousness, therefore God could not leave His soul in hell, neither could He suffer His Holy One to see corruption. He was God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, received up in glory. The angels must be witnesses of this great work of the resurrection of the Son of God. There would have been a hopeless gap in heaven, could it have been possible (which it was not, He could not be holden of it) for Christ not to have been raised from the dead and set at the right hand of God.

Now we see (I do not say realise) what this newness of life must be. The character of this newness of life is that I know the Father. Ought I not to see divine righteousness in it? Ought I not to see divine love in it? Ought I not to see the glory of His person in it? When I see Him who went down into the lowest parts of the earth, I see the Father's glory going down, so to speak, there, to raise Him up to His own right hand, and this it is that associates my thoughts with, and gives me the knowledge of, the Father's glory. The soul, in the power of the Holy Ghost, entering into the knowledge of the Person of Him who went down into the grave, must be filled with adoring wonder and praise, for the heart, seeing the Father concerned about Christ, goes up to the glory of the Father. Where God has thus made the

soul to comprehend that a once dead Christ has ascended up to God, that is everything. For how could you or I rise up to see the glory of the Father? Impossible! But His glory is brought near to me, when I see the Father raising up a dead Christ, knowing that Christ was in the grave, because of sin, though Son of God, and that He is now with God in heaven.

Thus my affections are drawn out, when I see who it was that went down to death for me. For how came He there? Because I was a sinner, yet He glorified His Father in ail that He, the Father, was. And do I not see that He, who was there so laid, deserved to be raised? For who was it? The blessed Son of God, who had taken the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man. Do you think that a poor unconverted person sees that the Father must have raised up Jesus, even for His own glory, seeing who He was, and what He had done? No; and therefore, when speaking to the woman of Samaria, when He had said, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink,” and she replies, “Give me this water,” and there was no intelligence of what He presented to her; then He speaks to her conscience, “Go, call thy husband,” and that opens her understanding. “I perceive thou art a prophet”; but when Jesus saith unto her, “I that speak unto thee am he,” then the divine knowledge of the Person of the Son of God opens out to her soul. And the Person of the Lord filling her heart, she goes and tells others about Him. The revelation of the Person of the Son of God to this woman’s soul, was the turning-point in her history. So it is with us. When we have intelligently received the Person of the Son of God, not as a doctrine merely, but as the object and power of a

new life in our souls, then our hearts follow Christ, as it were, and go up after Him in spirit in this new life, and everything is dead to us below. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. I do not say there will be no conflict, but the heart has done with everything out of Christ. Then, how very near it comes to us, yea, is realised in us! “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death “; that is, entering into, and associated with Him in death down here. Grace comes down to us here, and Christ goes down to death for us.

Was divine love the less, because it was down here, and not above? No: it reached even to my state of sin, for it was to sin that Christ died, as He did for my sins. Was divine power the less? No: He has destroyed, on the contrary, the power of death, and him who held it. It is there I learn that the Son of God must go down unto death, if He is to deliver me from sin; and as His heart followed me down here to be made sin, so now my heart is to follow Him in resurrection (for if I have a portion in His death, I shall have also in His resurrection). For I cannot have a half Christ, and it is not merely that my sins are put away, because justification includes not merely the fact that He died, but also that He is personally accepted of God, and if He raised again, it is in the power of a new life. So that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin, or as the word is, that you should not be the slaves of sin, for you were slaves unto sin, but now you are freed (justified) from sin. He does not speak merely of sins. But no one can charge sin, the activity of lust and will, on a dead man. You were slaves, properly speaking,

under the title of dominion by another, for the slave is ordered wherever his master pleases, not knowing at night what he should do in the morning; naturally we are slaves to sin.

The passage in John 8:33 is remarkable, as shewing that it was slavery to sin under the law, for the Jews being addressed as under the law, it says, the servant, or, slave, abideth not in the house for ever, but the Son abideth ever; if the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. So we are freed from the slavery in which we were held, and in perfect liberty, all having been left behind in death, for he that has done with sin must be dead to it. When a man is dead you cannot charge him with anything; his life has ceased to exist, he is out of the scene. If you say, How can I be free from sin, when I find it still in me? That is gone to which sin was attached. We are not told to die, for we are dead, and you cannot be charged with sin if you are dead, neither can you be under its power. Do you ask, How can that be, when I find I am not dead? Because it is in Christ you have died. Christ was put in your place. Is Christ in the grave? No; the thing to which sin is attached is gone, is done with, for He has died. Do not say it is not so. Are you wiser than God? for God says it is so. The tree and the fruit are both judged in God's sight. Christ has died for the tree and its fruit, as that which could be charged on you, and died to sin, so that you may reckon yourself dead to it. Christ attached sin to Himself on the cross, and it is gone for ever; there is an utter end of sin for faith; it is the vile thing I hate. Am I distressed about my evil deeds? They are the very things that Christ's death put away. Am I distressed about sin in the flesh? I am hot in the flesh, I have died

to it, for I have my life in Christ, who has died. “Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin.” I should have no need of such a word as reckon, if there was no more actual existence of sin in the flesh; I am called to mortify, in living power in Christ, the deeds of the body, not to die to sin, but to reckon myself dead. It is holy liberty from sin we have, and not liberty to sin. I am to reckon myself to be what faith shews me Christ is in my place; and walk in newness of life,1 then there will be the fruit unto holiness.

I would make two remarks here. First, the fruits are produced; still, the grand doctrine of Christianity is, that I am saved by a mediator; if I have to answer for myself, I am lost; “Enter not into judgment with thy servant,” Psa. 143:2. If God enters into judgment with me, all is over with me. The whole doctrine of grace is, saved by a mediator; for, “if I wash myself in snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, yet wilt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.” The instant I see God’s eye upon me, I shall see myself as one out of a ditch, yea, my clothes shall abhor me. Job wanted a daysman, to lay his hand upon both. My coming to God depends upon some one coming between.

The conscience should be delicate as to the slightest approach of evil, only let it be in hberty. The more delicate the conscience as to the sense of the least defilement, the more the need of a mediator is felt. But you say, I find that what ought to be dead in me is still alive. Well, did Christ die for the sin that you have not, or for the sin you have? The very sin you are daily finding out in yourself, this is the very sin for which Christ died.

Jealously of conscience about sin is right, the more the better, only with it remember the grace which has put it away. Christ has set me in a new life through Himself, raised from the dead, so that death cannot touch it, because He lives beyond its power; judgment cannot touch it, because He has borne it and died, there is not a single thing that could ever possibly come against me, that the blessed One did not allow to come against Him. Yea, He took it all upon Himself, and we are clean out of the Red Sea, on the other side; that life which we now live, we live by Him, reckoning ourselves dead to sin, because He died unto sin; He died not for Himself, but to sin, to enter into a new state of existence as man, and we live through Him. See the holiness of Him who was "made sin." He was taken through everything, He was thoroughly tested in every way, to try if He were in anything unwilling to obey. What if He had shrunk? But no, every evil was refused by His blessed holy nature. He learned obedience by the things He suffered. He went through everything—the scorn of the world—the power of Satan, even to the wrath of God. He was tempted in all points, like as we are, sin apart—Satan found nothing in Him. It was His meat and His drink to do His Father's will.

But it is never said He took delight in suffering for sin, but He says, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me"; the having His Father's countenance withdrawn from Him, when bearing the sin, He could not find delight in; but He had said before, "I delight to do my Father's will." This cup, He asked that it might pass from Him; no other cup did He ever ask to be withdrawn, and now He said, "Nevertheless, not as I

will, but as thou wilt." He would rather suffer this than that God should not be glorified.

We can now share the suffering for righteousness' sake, but the suffering for sin we cannot share; He made an end of that, and now He lives beyond it all in resurrection. He had the Spirit of holiness (all His life through this was true of Him), and during His life down here it was fully tested, but now we see Him alive again, "raised from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness "; therefore He is no half-Saviour, for He died unto sin, and now He liveth unto God. Therefore we are to reckon ourselves to be dead unto sin, and live unto God. This is a very practical question, for it is not that you are to say, if you have not the realisation of this, you cannot have the value of the blood; no; you must first know the value of the blood, and so have it all in Christ. The groundwork of living to Him is to be dead to sin; but we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin in Him. It can avail nothing to exhort you to live to God, if you have not the life of God in you. There is the double thing, the position in which God has set you, and the fact that people expect to see what you really are manifested.

It is not said experience yourself dead to sin, but reckon yourself; nor is it said you may reckon yourself so, when you see yourself walking with God; neither does He say, when sin does not reign in your mortal bodies, then reckon yourselves dead to sin. No; that is not grace; but the Holy Ghost draws the practical consequence from all which faith teaches. This is the only means of living godly before the world.

Righteousness, as stated in the end of chapter 5, shews me how I am enabled by it to live before God; I can only

be living before the world, then, as belonging to God; so I can only be living before God in the sense of acceptance, being justified from sins by the blood, and now dead to sin, reckoning myself so, because Christ who is my life died unto sin, and I am free. Then how blessedly comes in “yield yourselves,” not merely to righteousness, though it be so, but to God, never stopping short of God. If I do a right thing, and do not do it to God, all is short of its true end and character; my heart is not right in its aim and motive. I should really therefore yield myself to God. Did Christ ever do anything for Himself? No; for in the gospels we see His was a life of love. He had not time even to eat; always living for others. He not only did things which were commanded, but because they were commanded; the will of God being not only the guide, but the motive of all He did. He gave Himself for us, but a sacrifice and offering to God.

Well, then, if you are delivered from sin, you are delivered from yourself, and what a blessed deliverance, to have a right to have done with myself! It is the best thing in the world to have done with myself. “Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” If we are under the law, we are under the dominion, as well as under the curse of sin. “Oh, but,” you say, “sin has dominion over me, therefore I am afraid God will not have me.” What are you doing with grace? How can you dare to come before God for anything, if you are not standing in grace? It is only as you are under grace, that you can have any power over sin. If you are standing in grace, you are under favour, because God is good—you are free, but you are under grace; therefore Romans 5 comes before chapter 6,

righteousness before holy liberty in life, and if you try to reverse them, you get into chapter 7.

If, because I do not love Christ as I ought, which is a higher thing than the law, I then begin to doubt whether I am His or not, I am still under law, but with a higher standard, Christ being the law, instead of the ten commandments. It is not realising grace. God loves the holy angels, but that is not properly speaking grace. Grace is love towards those who do not deserve it. Oh! but you say, if a man is delivered from the law he may become careless; the subtlety of the heart is such that it is quite true it may abuse grace. Law is given to convict of sin; man uses it to make out righteousness; grace to free man from sin, and give him power over it, and he uses it to licentiousness. But a person is not to be licentious, because he is free from the law— “ye became the servants of righteousness.”

If we are led of the Spirit, we are not under the law, but we shall be led in holiness; we have liberty, and not slavery, but it is divine deliverance from the power of sin; we yield ourselves wholly to God, because we are free to do so, and if God has given you liberty, will you be a slave again to sin? But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness. What is holiness? Separation from, and abhorrence of what is evil, and for us by separation of heart to God. I should not call Adam holy, but innocent; God is holy, for God abhors evil, having full knowledge of it, and delights in good; Christ is holy; we, too, are holy, for in the new man which we have put on, we hate the evil and love the good, though we cannot do it as God does. Holiness in us must necessarily have God for its object. In walking in righteousness, the heart has to say

to God obediently; the will is not in activity, the lusts not at work. The effect, through grace, is growing separation of heart to God, and acquaintance with Him. Thus you have your fruit unto holiness. What fruit does sin bear? None; it only brings to death. I walk in what is pleasing to God, and thus, the new man being active likes what God likes; and what will be the consequence of this? In the moral activities of this new life, I get separated from the influence of evil, increasing in the knowledge of God; not only actual fruits produced (though that is true, as the tree will be known by its fruits), but this practical bringing forth of internal fruit is connected with righteousness according to the will of God, and a walk with Him in the light.

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; I get drawn away from the spirit of the world—this practical walking with God is connected with growth in the knowledge of God, leads me on in likeness to Him: in every-day life to have a constant reference to God's will, leads into the light practically. "If the eye be single, the whole body will be full of light." Learning God—going on with God, not merely slipping and then getting on again. It is not simply desiring to live to Christ, but our hearts should be more withdrawn from everything around, a thorough consecration of the heart, a growing up in the knowledge of God in heart and spirit; and there will be this growing up unto God, if our life be yielded to Him—servants to God—having God's will as our blessed privilege. God's own will, flowing from His nature, should be our will. What is higher or more blessed than this? It is what Christ had; Christ thought it worth while to leave heaven to do God's will, that we might be drawn

up there, and made to bring forth fruit unto holiness down here.

There is a positive joy in pleasing God, it is perfect liberty. The gift of God is eternal life; and it is sweet to see that while grace leads us through the path of righteousness, it is still all grace. I would rather have eternal life as the gift of God, than ten lives of my own, because it is the proof of His love to me. The Lord grant that our hearts may be so grounded in grace, that we may indeed yield ourselves unto God, and be growing up in the doing of His will—remembering it is founded on reckoning ourselves dead to sin, and alive unto God; thus we live out of the world, as to separation from evil, as He is.

Chapter 7.

You will remember what we have been treating of up to the end of chapter 3, all under sin, and propitiation made for our sins by the precious blood of Christ. All our actual guilt dealt with; so that we cannot overrate the importance of the subject. So in chapter 4 we have seen the apostle developing the grand doctrine of the resurrection—the believing in God as the One who raised the dead. It is not merely putting away sin from the guilty person, but it is God acting on the very Person who was delivered for our offences, and for a little moment under death.

The power of this raising the dead was first exercised on the Person of Christ, here looked at as delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification—that is, the application does not go beyond the justifying effect of resurrection, the new position of Christ as delivered for our offences, and so raised again by God, a witness

of the efficacy of His work, and the new place He has thus entered into as Man. Elsewhere we learn what the exercise of the same power of God is in us who believe, so that we are viewed as risen with Him, but this is Ephesian teaching. There we see the saints quickened by the Spirit of God, in the exercise of the very same divine power that raised Christ from the dead and quickened together with Christ, the same being thus associated with Christ in resurrection.

In chapter 5:1-11, we have the results of this resurrection of Christ. The justification of the sinner by faith, in putting away sins by the blood, and a full justification through the resurrection of Christ, peace, present favour, hope of glory, rejoicing in tribulations, rejoicing in God Himself.

From verse 12 to end of chapter, we get our connection with the first Adam, and the Last, so that not merely individual sins are in question, but a single head involving those connected with it in the consequences of his act, and in the partaking of a life or nature derived from that head—the one constituting his family, sinners; the other, righteous. The flesh says, if one man's obedience makes me righteous, I may continue in the sin of my old nature! No: you are dead to sin, and what you are dead to, you cannot live in.

In chapter 6 the objections of the natural man to the obedience of Christ constituting us righteous are all met, as the apostle connects practical righteousness and a holy life with being dead with Christ, and the reception of a new life to God through Him as a necessary result. This important point we must pursue a little more fully. The Christ in whom we have part, as

thus interested in His obedience, is Christ who has died and is risen; and if we are associated with Him, we are associated with Him in death. The public profession of Christianity was baptism to His death. We have been planted in the likeness of His death, we cannot live in what we have died to.

This treats of our continuance in sin, the principle and condition of our Adam nature. But more, if planted in the likeness of His death, we shall be of His resurrection; that is, the power of His life will shew itself in us.

He does not say we are risen with Him; which would in itself suppose full redemption, with life, and a place and condition before God. Here it is practical, a new character of life—we are to walk in newness of life. I am, then, to reckon myself dead, and alive unto God, through, or in, Jesus Christ our Lord. Yet it is not as raised with Him, but quickened by Him or in the power of His life. When quickened together with Him, He is looked at as dead, and union is involved in it; not “with” here, but we have the new life through Him. Hence, I am free, for I reckon the old nature dead.

Here comes in the second point of the chapter. To whom am I going to yield myself, if thus free in life—to sin again? God forbid. I am a slave, to use a human figure, says the apostle, to Him to whom I give myself up, not therefore surely to sin, but to God; and my members as instruments of righteousness to God. The law I am not under; that comes requiring, and really addresses itself to me as alive in the flesh. But the absence of legal requirement does not lead me to sin, my freedom is to serve God, to be obedient. Such is life through Christ.

But there is more: what fruit had we in the things we are now ashamed of? None; and they end in death. But now we have, in the path of obedience, fruit—fruit unto holiness. “Shew me thy way,” says Moses, “that I may know thee.” In the path of obedience will is not at work, lusts are not at work; we are with God, we have His mind, our hearts are separate to Him, we know Him better. Hence, in increased spiritual discernment of good and evil, and conscious knowledge of God, there is fruit unto holiness, intelligent separation of heart to Him, ever better known.

The beginning of the chapter raises the question of continuance in sin, when another’s obedience makes us righteous; the end, when set free, to what we yield ourselves, and its blessed fruit, yet bringing out all as grace. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. And let us remark, that while it is for righteousness and for obedience —for the new nature loves both—it is to God, we yield ourselves to God. What a blessed freedom of heart and position, to be able to give ourselves up, and up to God Himself, in the knowledge of Him! In the chapter which follows he shews how, as dead, we are not under law, which claims, and is not freedom, nor delivers at all, so as to be free to yield ourselves thus to God.

Chapter 7, then, applies this doctrine of being dead to our position in respect of the law. The practical effect of the new nature in me, if not freed from the law, is to give me such a sense of what God is, and what self is, as to make me perfectly miserable. It gives me the sense of good and evil, but good unattained, and evil to which I am a slave. But this chapter 7 shews the effect of my being dead, on my relationship with law: I am delivered

from it. It is not merely that we are justified, nor yet merely that we have a new nature, but that we are delivered from the law. The apostle takes care to shew that there is no fault in the law, but that we are delivered from it.

As many as pretend to take their stand with God, as being under the law, are under the curse, “for as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.” It is not that the works are bad, but the effect of our being under the law puts us under the curse. It is useless for you to talk of using the law, not for justification, but for sanctification, or as a rule of life: you cannot use the law for this or that according to your own fancies. It will use its rights over you as it pleases. God is saying by the law to those who are under it, “You have not obeyed Me, and I am going to curse you.” You cannot deal with God’s law as you like; for if you will have God’s law, you must take it with all the consequences God has attached to it.

There is no power whatever in the law to sanctify. It is not in the capacity of the law to sanctify a sinner. It is holy, just, and good, but when applied it must condemn the sinner. It must condemn all under it. It requires from themselves obedience to it. Nothing ever so fully established the claims of the law as God’s Son dying under it. Of course, the positive effect of our being under the law is, that it of itself puts us under the curse. But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully.

Assuredly, the law is good; it would be blasphemy to think otherwise. But the question is, what is the lawful use of it? It is never said that it is good to be under the law, though the law is good in itself. The law is good to

detect the state of the heart. Who is there that has not broken the law? Who has not lusted? Who loves God with all his heart? No; you love yourselves better; and who loves his neighbour really quite as well as himself? Not one of us; then we are all under the curse, if we are under the law. The law is good, if a man use it lawfully; knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient.

The law is useful as a weapon, but it is one that has no handle; for if I, a man in the flesh take it to use against others, it pierces me through quite as much as those against whom I wield it. It is as sharp for me as for them. See John 8, where the scribes and Pharisees brought to Jesus a woman taken in adultery; their wicked hearts thought to prove Jesus to be in the wrong, whether in condemning or saving her. If He condemned, He was no Saviour—the law could do as much; if He let off, He had set aside the law— profound wickedness! They quote the law; very well; but it is as much a law to themselves as for her; for Jesus said unto them, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her,” “and they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one.” Christ having thus condemned them all by the law, He then takes up the woman in grace, and says to her, “Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.” The law was made for unrighteous persons. Why do I say to you, that you must not lust? If lust were not there, where would be the use of it? But if lust is there, what can the law do but condemn it? As a system, the law was given 2,600 years after sin came in, and what could it do but condemn? It was never meant to do anything but to condemn, to prove the heart, and to give the knowledge of sin: we

should thoroughly understand what deliverance from it is, if we would be truly free in Christ—children of the free woman. It is surely useful always, as God's weapon to convince.

In chapter 7, the apostle applies the doctrine of death to the law, and he opens it in this way, "Know ye not that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?" It is true even of human law, and physical death. He proceeds with the analogy of husband and wife. You cannot have two husbands at one and the same time—we cannot have Christ and the law both at once. We are bound up with one or the other, as a principle, to God. The woman cannot have two husbands. "Wherefore ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ." It is not that the law has died, we are dead; the image, so far, changes, but the bond is broken; and this difference is blessed, because I hold also my old evil nature for dead, and this is by the body of Christ. In His death, as we have seen, I reckon myself dead. The law was never abrogated, and the principle of it was sanctioned as of God, and those that have sinned under it will be judged by it. Verse 6 correctly reads: "but now we are clear from the law, having died in that in which we were held." It is not then, that the law is dead, but we are dead to that by which we were held. Hence, note, death to sin goes with it. Therefore, the apostle says, we are dead to the law by the body of Christ, because Christ was made a curse for us, and died under it, as bearing the curse. But how? Why the law applied its full curse to Him, as willingly offering Himself, and He died under it.

The law as a weapon took its full effect on Christ. It did everything it possibly could, by way of its curse coming on Christ. The curse of the law was the death of the

sinner, and Christ in grace was made sin for us; therefore, what could the law do more than spend its full curse on the head of Him, who was made sin for us, who died under the law? Christ was born under the law and kept it. He puts Himself under its curse, and goes through it all, and rises entirely out of it. And faith applies Christ's position to the believer. But alas! to how many Christians law is Christianity. But Christ comes as a Mediator, and takes my place, my whole cause: and faith has received all that. He thus was in my place, bringing all the good of it to myself, as if I were in His place. He is not speaking of union with Him now, as in Ephesians. I come and have my place actually and livingly in Christ, for He is the quickening Spirit, the last Adam, who comes and gives me a portion with Himself in His present position. All question of the claims of the law upon the believer has passed away in Christ, for in Christ he has died to the life and position in which he could be under it; and now I have a life in Christ after the whole question of law is settled before God. I am married to another husband, to Him who is raised from the dead.

The Jew is still fully under the law. The believer has died to it in Christ.. Does this weaken the power of the law? No, not at all, it has all its power. See Galatians 2:19, 20. I through the law am dead to the law. But it cannot put forth its killing power on me, if I am dead. It has killed me, and that is what delivers me, for I am in Christ, and it killed Him. The law found sin in me, and executed all its full curse upon Him, who was made sin for me; and now I can reason about it in peace, because its curse is gone, which has been fully borne by Christ.

The law was formerly the religious tie with God, but now another is our tie with God. For it is not now the law, but my new husband, Christ in resurrection; we are dead to the law by the body of Christ, that we should be married to another, even to Him that is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. And because of this new graft in the heart of the believer, God is looking for new fruit; for God has ceased to look for fruit from man's nature, it has only brought forth wild evil fruit. This was fully brought out in the cross of Christ; but now there is the new thing, on which God's mind is set. Well, then, as we cannot have the two husbands at once, so if in any wise we are under the law, we are under its curse; and what is more, you cannot get from under its curse, for you have sin in your flesh, and the law can never allow the working pf sin in the flesh, it must necessaily bring out its curse. You talk of sanctification, but you are not sanctified enough for the law, for it will not let you off in any wise. You may have the desire to be good, but you have not yet owned how thoroughly bad you are. God is not looking for any good in you, for He says, "There is none that understandeth, none that seeketh, none righteous, no, not one." Now this you do not believe, for you are thinking there is some good in you, or hoping for it; you do not believe yourself to be thoroughly bad, as God says you are. And the very way God brings to our consciences what we really are, is that He often leaves us under the condemnation of the law, that it may prove to us what our true state by nature is; and when we have learnt this, we shall be glad enough to be delivered from the law.

Do you say, that being taken from under the law leads to licentiousness? What! do you mean to say, then, that Christ's life in us leads to licentiousness? It is true that the flesh will abuse everything; but the living power of grace, the reality, what there is in the life of Christ, cannot be believed in by those who say, that if we are not kept under the law we shall sin.

If you use the law for sanctification, you do not know yourselves; and if you think you will be holier by living under the law, it is plain you do not know what it is. I dare any one of you to be under it in God's presence. No; not one of you could stand under it in God's presence for one single moment: "In thy sight shall no man living be justified." This is the ground the law will take with you; it can take no other, for the law knows nothing of grace—it would not be law if it did. Again, I say, you are not really reduced to the sense of what it is to be brought under the law, if you present yourself to God to be judged by it, and the law always brings into judgment, and then all is over, all is lost. The law allows of no excuse. It will have a perfect righteousness in use.

But farther, when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death; that was not the fault of the law, for while there is will in man, man can never produce what God desires. The law is applied to man as he is, it does not speak of the new nature. The law says, I must have obedience to God. You say, Oh! but I have flesh in me. I know nothing of that, says the law. I hate these lusts, you reply to it. So do I, says the law, and that is the reason I am cursing you, for you have them. The law allows of no excuses, and this is its value; it would not be a perfect law if it did, for it would be a bad law if

it allowed any evil or failure. Do you love God with all your heart? No; you know you do not. Then you are under the curse. Do you love your neighbour as yourself? No; I do not deny there may be much kindness of feeling, sympathy, and the like; but if your neighbour loses his fortune, do you feel it just as much as if you had lost your own? No, you do not. Then you are under the curse. The effect of a law where there is a will is that it brings out the will; for it makes a man strive against that which checks his will, but that is not the fault of the law, but the fault of sin that there is in him. It is in fallen human nature to will to do a thing that is forbidden; for instance, if a cup were turned over on the table, and at the same time it was declared that no one must know what was under it, all in the room would desire to know it immediately. Thus sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

Now, we are delivered from the law. But do you really believe that it is deliverance? If not, you do not know what flesh is, neither do you know what holiness is. Still, the law is good of itself: that must ever be guarded. It would be blasphemy to speak ill of it as God’s law. But now we are delivered from the law, having died in that wherein we were held, that we should serve in the newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. The law is not dead. It is still in full force against the unrighteousness of the man who is under it; but I have died under it. The law has condemned me, and spent its full curse on me in Christ.

The moment I get life in Christ, I am in partnership with Him, and partnership involves participation in all the advantages of the one with whom we are admitted partners. All my debts having been discharged withal, I

am brought into the position in which Christ is. I brought nothing in. His kindness brought me in. But then I speak as a partner would of his capital, customers, and the like; so we, of being dead, alive, and the like. And now I can serve in the newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. We do not blame the law. God forbid! But I had not known sin, but by the law, “for when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.” Thus death was brought into my soul by the knowledge of sin; but will that bring to God? Never! It shews my need of grace and a deliverer. The law says, Thou shalt not lust; then it is all over with me, for I am one with Adam, and I am full of lust. “Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence”; that is, the law suggested it, by forbidding it.

Suppose a person to say, “I am going to do such and such a thing,” and I say, “Oh, don’t do that,” when self-will is at work, he desires the more to do it immediately. It is useless to try and combat with sin in this way. Yet the awakened conscience and the prohibition combine to make one know that it is wrong, and put me consciously guilty before God. The commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. This was not the fault of the commandment, but being a sinner, the commandment which should have been the ministration of life, which said, “Do this and live,” necessarily became the ministration of death.

Let me return now to verse 5, which contains an important principle, from which all this sorrow flows. “When we were in the flesh”: compare this with verse 9 of chapter 8, “But ye are not in the flesh” (though the flesh may be in you). Now this is the key to all that has

been said, and gives it its full power. If you are dead with Christ, and have life through Him, you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. The natural man, we know, is in the flesh, nor does the law quicken him. But there is a further case. Suppose him quickened and under the law: still the law takes up man in the flesh, in principle, as to his position and conscience, and condemns him in the very thing in which he stands, as to his own consciousness before God, that is, his own personal responsibilities, but according to God's intention.

Now, as regards my conscious position, I am always in the flesh, that is, as a child of Adam, on my own responsibility; till I know myself to be dead with Christ, and redeemed out of it. The being born again only makes me apprehend the spirituality of the law, the force of "Thou shalt not lust." It does not shew me sin in nature, but it gives me the knowledge of it by its first movements, and the painful discovery that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. I still do what I hate, and do not do what I would. It does not give the Spirit, which does give power, as it is the witness of liberty, but leaves a man just where he was in his responsibility, according to the first Adam's place, and says, "Keep the law, and there is life; do this, and live"; and if there be life communicated, it does not hinder the working of the flesh, which yet it still condemns, and our conscience says, rightly. Thus the fact of being quickened by God does not give deliverance, while the conscience is under the law, though such have really a part in it; but it gives through the law the deep sense of the need of deliverance, because we cannot succeed in what we really desire. The law and flesh, and sin and death, go together, they are correlative. But if I have

died, the other three have lost their power over me. If dead I am clearly no longer in the flesh. I say, When we were in the flesh, the motions of sin which were by the law wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But as to our conscious place, we all are in the flesh, unless the Spirit of God by virtue of redemption dwell in us. Redemption, therefore, and the knowledge of redemption (of our having died, moreover, with Christ), is what we need for this deliverance. The apostle, while ascribing the effect to the law, yet carefully guards the law: “Was, then, that which is good made death unto me? God forbid! But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.”

This brings us to the main point of the chapter, not only flesh, of which we have spoken, but the operation of the law, and its effect, and that even on those who can delight in it spiritually. It works death; for we, Christians, know it is spiritual, but I as a child of Adam, am carnal, sold, that is a slave, under sin; and sin only becomes exceeding sinful by the law, working in me all manner of concupiscence. It has not, then, as such, sanctifying power. It cannot make me holy. Is not the law good then? Yes! it is holy, just, and good. But I, as in the flesh, am not subject to it.

The apostle asks two questions here: Is the law sin? No, he says; but he would not have known sin, nor had sin on his conscience, but for it. Secondly, was it made death to him? No doubt sin wrought death in him by it. And this is its use. There is the knowledge of sin, and sin becomes exceeding sinful. Note here, it is all along sin, not sins. Paul had nothing externally on his conscience;

but when the law became spiritual to him, then he found lusts and sin. That is what is discovered here, it is not what we have done, but what we are, that is, in the flesh.

There are three things in this chapter. In the first six verses, we have the doctrine—we have died to the law by the body of Christ, and we are married to another, even Christ risen from the dead; then verses 7-13, the conclusion, with the inquiry, is it sin? does it work death? and verses 14 to the end, experience, before being delivered from the law. And here it is of importance to mark how the apostle says “I” and “we.” When he says “I,” he is taking us in our individual state; but when he says “we,” then it is as Christians, as believers in Christ, that he is speaking of us. If he says “I,” then he is beginning to deal with individual members; for if I begin to talk of myself, then I find sin in myself every day. It is a personal, practical consciousness of what is working in my heart. But that is not my place in Christ, and there is the difference. And this gives us the key to the passage. It is one who has Christian knowledge, judging what flesh is, but what it is in its effect on me in the presence of, and under the law. It is what I am in myself, that is, in the flesh. I am carnal; in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing. In this part of the chapter, all is “I” and “me” therefore, which are used some thirty times; but he never speaks of Christ or of the Spirit at all until the close of the chapter. It is the experience of what the flesh is, viewed in the light of the requirements of a spiritual law, deliverance being yet unknown, and not the knowledge by faith of what I am in Christ. It is the personal experience of myself in flesh, but mixed with the clear

knowledge of a Christian, who looks back at it; but not the state of a man in Christ, whom the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made free.

What is in chapter 7, then, is a man under the law. It is not simply the effect of conflict between the new and the old nature, but the effect of being under the law when both are there. It does not say that Christ is good, but takes much lower ground, and says that the law is holy, just, and good. Chapter 7 is the discussion of the law applied to the practical experience of a man, struggling to live righteously under it. A natural man cannot delight in the law of God with his heart, the new nature does; but then, according to that nature, we see he always wills what is right, yet he never does it, because he has no power. Now, do you not find that, in a vast majority of cases, what you want is power to do what is right? Well, then, the law will never give it you; for the law is as weak to give you power to do right, as it is strong to condemn you when you do wrong. The secret of it all is, that when in the flesh there is no power, and it is all self till we see that; and till Christ is known as the Deliverer from the law, it is always I, I, I, and we shall be floundering about, and only getting deeper and deeper into it, like a man in a morass, who attempting to lift one leg out, only sinks the other deeper in the mire; there may be a desire to get out, but he must have a deliverer; there is ever the desire to be this or that, or to do this or that, being thus occupied with self instead of Christ. It is true you ought to desire holiness, but how are you to get power to be holy?

Suppose you were, what will never be, a great deal more holy than you are, would that give you peace, when you have not been brought to a righteous standing before

God in Christ? If you think your own holiness could give you peace, you are not even depending on His blood, and certainly you do not know yourselves. What then is all this struggling meant for? Just to let you know you cannot have peace in this way, nor righteousness and holiness in the flesh and by the law, that you may know yourselves, and what flesh is.

There is such a tendency in us to be thinking of these I's and me's, thus to set up self in God's place, that God says, Well, you shall have so much of self, that you shall be thoroughly glad to have done with yourself, and to this end, God often suffers us to be brought through all this, to be put under the law, with a new nature and a good will, which only leads to "O wretched man that I am," for it is only man. There is the love of good, but no power to do it, for man is as powerless as he is wicked. He is, through labouring to do, brought to cry out, "Who shall deliver?" He is looking for another to deliver him; he gives it up as a hopeless thing, yet cannot, dare not, do without it. It is not that man is to get a better self, but a deliverance from self. This may be the work of a day or years, according to circumstances; man is brought to his own level, and then God in grace can come in. Then comes thanksgiving, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The only way by which man gets power is by being shewn that he has none of himself, and then he is not delivered by getting victory, and so peace, but by finding he is in Christ, has died to and is out of the flesh, and only in Christ, through whom he fives before God. Then God can give him power. "When we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Man must know God as his Saviour, before he knows Him as

his strength. There must be salvation; then comes peace, and progress.

The doctrine, then, in chapter 7, is that we cannot have Christ and the law, or the two husbands at once; but, that we are dead to the law, and bound to Christ risen. The motions of sin which were by the law did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But it is not the fault of the law, yet it brings death into our consciences; the law, moreover, is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin; and it serves to the renewed man to teach him by practical experience what sin really is, and makes it exceeding sinful. The fruit of the experience gained under it is, first, to know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing—not what I have done, but what I am, that is my flesh; next, to distinguish between self and sin, for I hate it, its very pressure makes me know it, thus taught of God; but, thirdly, that if I do hate it, it is too strong for me, has still power over me; a law in my members bringing me into captivity. But this powerlessness, thus learned, when I feel the evil and the burden, leads me to have done with self, and look for a deliverer; a deep and weighty lesson; but having been crucified with Christ, I am delivered; hence, here he thanks God. The doctrine he had taught already; he is now come to the point where the effect is realised. The law has spent its full curse on the person of Christ, and so on us also, as reckoned to our favour, as associated with Christ in death; now we are married to Him risen.

The law is often applied by God to bring home to the soul a sense of its powerlessness, for it is easier to learn we are sinful, than to learn that we have no power. Conscience will soon tell us we are sinful, as regards

acts, but it requires this divine teaching to know the sin in our nature. We often need to be brought through struggle after struggle, before we acknowledge that in our flesh dwells no good thing, that we have no power; we may assent to it as a doctrine, but we must also experience the truth of it in the secrecy of our own souls.

It is a humbling, but most profitable lesson; the difference is evident always to every experienced eye, indeed, to oneself, as to confidence in self, besides turning to the liberty wherewith Christ has set us free.

The Lord give you to weigh well this important principle, that there is no forgiveness of sins but of grace, through Christ's death. For an evil nature, for sin—Christ having died for us, as "for sin,"—is condemned in His death, and we are set free, for we have died with Him. Also remember this, that it is the discovery of what we really are, that settles the question of the law. Then we shall be glad to get rid of what only can and ought to bring a curse upon us, and to be brought into fellowship with Christ the Lord.

Chapter 8.

In this well-known and remarkable chapter, we have the results of what we have been considering in what precedes. Chapter 5:1-11 gave us the peace, present grace, and hope, which Christ's dying for our sins gave us, and what God is to us in and by it. This chapter gives our state and place before Him, and as such in the world, a kind of picture of what a Christian is.

There are three distinct parts in the detail of this chapter. First—Our state in Christ—the fruit of the grace

of God. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death,” brought out in its inward power and fruitfulness, and with that, sin in the flesh condemned, but in Christ’s death a sacrifice for it. This part goes down to verse 13. Second.—The person and presence of the Holy Ghost in us, down to verse 29. Third.—There is a transition from the work of God inwardly, in our souls, to the outward security, what God is for us, what we count upon Him for; and that makes it so sweet, for He says, “nor any other creature.” And surely any creature whatever must be inferior to God: therefore he says, “If God be for us, who can be against us? “So that from verse 29 to the end of the chapter it is God for us, the outward security, so to speak, unconnected with the work within us, that he had spoken of in the beginning of the chapter, though preserving them in divine love, in whom it is wrought, for the glory; and so entirely is this the case, that when he says, “whom he justified,” he does not add, “them he also sanctified” (though that be true), but “them he also glorified.”

I repeat again these three distinct parts in the chapter. First.—The inward effect of the living power of the Spirit of God in our souls, down to verse 13. Second.—The personal presence of the Holy Ghost in us, down to verse 29. Third.— From verse 29 to the end of the chapter, all the saving power of what God is, according to His counsel, for us outwardly, not looking at His work within the soul, but maintaining it to the end.

It may be noticed by some that I have said nothing on the last verse of chapter 7. “With the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.” Now a godly person might suppose having come to the

deliverance there is in Christ Jesus, that conflict then was all entirely over. Now that is not the case, as it is after the soul has known deliverance by Jesus Christ that this great principle clearly comes out, “with the mind I serve the law of God”; as the apostle for the same reason could tell us what that state was. I cannot do this till I have known deliverance. I cannot calmly describe how one sinks, as I have said, in the morass, till I am out of it. I am crying out for help, for my safety; but this last verse states the abiding general principle (flesh remains in us after we have known deliverance), and hence the conflict to keep it down; therefore in chapter 7:25, we see there is conflict after deliverance, as before, because there are conflicting principles of nature contradictory one to another: but we are no longer under the law after deliverance, we belong to another. Moreover, the power of the Spirit is there in us.

Thus in chapter 7 the new nature and the flesh are opposed to each other, but under law, while in Galatians 5 it is the opposition of flesh and Spirit. “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh,” because in the Galatians it is about those who have the Spirit, and therefore you get real power here, after the deliverance, which you do not get in Romans 7, because they have not received the Spirit. So that in Romans 7 it is not flesh lusting against the Spirit, but man under the law; whereas in Galatians it is added, if we walk in the Spirit, we are not under law. Therefore he does not say here (Rom. 7), “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit,” but he cries out, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me? for what I would that I do not, but what I hate that do I.” But ye (that believe) are not in the flesh, but “in the Spirit.” “As many as are led by the

Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Therefore in Galatians, when they have got the Spirit, they are exhorted to walk in the Spirit. But if they have the Holy Ghost, why this exhortation to walk in the Spirit? Because the flesh is still there, and lusteth against the Spirit.

But when a man is led of the law, he is still, as to his standing and conscience, in the flesh, though, if really Christ's, he cannot be entirely holden there. But you are not led of the law. "For ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you." And if ye be led of the Spirit, ye cannot be under the law, for when really under the law, ye must be led of the flesh; for sin loses its dominion as well as its power to accuse only by our not being under law, but under grace, because the law can in no wise place us in known grace nor give the Spirit. Therefore if under it you cannot be led of the Spirit.

Now then we are prepared to see the deliverance and the extent of it, and also that it is God's deliverance. In the first three verses of this chapter we have the results of the argument in the end of chapter 5, and in chapters 6 and 7. In verse 1 we have the result of chapter 5, as in the last Adam, then the displacing of the Adam nature by our being dead with Christ by the power of the Spirit of life in Him. In verse 2, and in chapter 6, dead to sin, and alive to God through Christ. In verse 3, as in chapter 7, dead to the law; and then in chapter 8, no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. Still he does not merely repeat what is there, but brings forward according to the full light of faith, and divine teaching, the actual condition of the believer, which that reasoning had brought him up to. That prepared the

way, in contrast with the old state in Adam, and in replying to objections. This gives the actual condition of him who is delivered.

The conclusion is in the first verse by itself; “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” They have passed out of the flesh as before God and are in Christ who has died and risen again; and, having suffered for our sins, is past death and judgment and the whole condition of sin, even as having to say to it for others. There cannot therefore be condemnation for me in Him. The ‘therefore’ is not a consequence drawn as an argument, but a great moral result demonstrated by the condition of things developed in what precedes.

Verse 2 begins the full resulting view, as ‘for’ is constantly used by the apostle—the result of what is passing in the apostle’s mind—not the proof of his textual argument. The power of life in Christ, acting in and for itself, has set me free from the law of the old man altogether; I may foolishly listen to it, but I am not, really, at all under its power. Just as the breath which God breathed into Adam’s nostrils gave him power to use his previously formed body, so the power of life in Christ enables me to serve now in the liberty and power of that life. But another truth comes in to make this good— redemption and resurrection. If it were only a new nature, new in its desires, it would give the sense of responsibility, the conscience of sin, and, in the hatred of it, the knowledge that God must be against it, and thus fear and dread as regards God. This is Romans 7, and in principle, law; but what law could not do, God has sent His Son and accomplished. The blessed and sinless Lord has come, and in the likeness of sinful flesh, and

for sin, that is, as a sacrifice for sin. Thus God has condemned sin in the flesh. It has been dealt with; that which my conscience recognised, which held me in bondage, cannot accuse me any more. Its condemnation is past, but executed, and I have, in that same work of Christ, died to it. I live to God through Him that is risen, to whom I am bound. Thus verse 3 shews me that work of God which leaves me free to live in the life of verse 2. The actual requirements of the law will be thus fulfilled, because I am not under it, and I live by a life which does not do what is contrary to God's will.

Under the first Adam, who brought in sin and death, there was nothing but what pressed down; while in the last Adam, the Lord from heaven, it is all lifting up, but lifting up from under the power of sin, as well as from its condemnation— perfect liberty. God has come in in delivering power; but you say, How is that? God's Son went down under death for our sins, and rose in the power of the life of the Son of God without them, and by association with Him, we are taken from under our sins, and the law of sin in the old man, into resurrection-life with Him. Thus, then, if I am dead and in Christ risen, there can be no condemnation, for I have died under God's judgment against sin, and am alive after the judgment has been executed for sin on Him who died for it. I am alive only to God in Him, not in the flesh in which sin is, the sense of sins put away; there can therefore now be no condemnation, for it is God Himself that justifies.

God came in in power when man was a sinner, by Christ's coming and taking us out of the old, and putting us into the new condition altogether. Therefore now it is no question of hope, where faith is simple. I do not hope

anything about the cross, because it is a past thing, executed and done. We do not now trust in a promise for salvation, but in the fact, the accomplishment of a promise (of course we do trust in a promise for every day's need and deliverance, but that is quite another thing).

By one righteousness the free gift is of many offences unto justification of life. And the way He is bringing them is beyond death, and hence deliverance from the guilt of sin; but through death alive in God's presence, and thus not in the flesh, in which the power of sin was, but in Christ, and there is no condemnation there; and then the reason he gives for this, saying, "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." And here is the secret of the walk, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," for now he enters on the power of the Spirit, but still, first, on the power of life, for what we do not get in chapter 7, we get here fully, that is, Christ and the Spirit. Having laid the foundation in virtue of what Christ has done, and having given us life, He then works in us; for this is what we find, the living power of the Spirit of life in Christ setting us, as associated with Him, out of the sphere of the power of condemnation, death, and law; because my life, as a Christian, is through Christ, so that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. It is this which introduces the doctrine of the Spirit's presence, of which this chapter now proceeds to speak. "What the law could not do" (that is, effect righteousness by keeping it in the flesh), he that walks in the Spirit does; he fulfils the law, and that is the practical result of our position, but the law could never give that power.

I desire to call attention again to verse 1: there is great force and power in it. It does not say you are not condemned, but, “there is now no condemnation,” and that goes much farther; for if there is any question of sin on the conscience, the nearer we are to God, the more distressed and anxious we shall be, and therefore the soul needs this full assurance. Could anyone say there was any condemnation for Christ? and that now even, as regards His connection with us? surely not! for He is the Holy One, the accepted Man in the presence of God, having perfectly glorified Him in His work for us. Then how can there be any condemnation for the one that is in Him, for whom this work was wrought? Therefore he says, “There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” This is more than saying to them for whose sins Christ died, than if it was said on Christ Jesus—as Aaron wore the breastplate as part of the vestment, so that the names of the children of Israel were borne on his heart; and when the light of Jehovah’s countenance fell on Aaron with full favour, the same light shone on the names engraved on the breast-plate. But this in Romans 8 is much more, being in the presence of God as Christ is; all the old sins gone; himself, as to the old man, dead with Christ, and he himself before God in perfect acceptance.

Verse 2. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” The old man could never get rid of its law (law here is power, or nature acting uniformly), but here we have another man, the new man; and that has its law, and what is that? life in Christ: a law as uniform in its spirit of action as any natural law. And this law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is godliness, associating with Him out of the

sphere of sin and death. The law, dealing with the old man, had no power against this law of sin and death—this contrary spirit of action; but now there is the new man, with a new law, and that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus; but he does not speak of walking in the Spirit, till he has said, “no condemnation,” as there is no power for walk till that question is settled. We saw in chapter 7 the desires of the new life, but working towards the law, and, therefore, no power; but here it is life itself in Christ acting in its own law.

Verse 3. “For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh.” The law was not in fault. It failed through the weakness of the flesh; you cannot make anything perfect out of bad materials. A man may be a very skilful workman, but if you set him to work on bad materials, all his skilfulness would prove of no avail. If it is to carve on wood, for instance, he may display the most exquisite taste and workmanship, and produce that which all must admire, and declare to be perfect, and without a blemish or a fault: but if he were to attempt to do the same on clay instead of wood, or on rotten wood, it would crumble to pieces beneath his hand, and thus all his skill would go for nothing; so the law attempting to work on the flesh only crumbles it to pieces. The law never effected the giving of righteousness. It promises life to those who keep it, but it never gives life; what man could not do, God can do. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh,” in dying the just for the unjust. God condemned, or, as you might say, executed sin in the flesh for us by the death of Christ. He did not die only for my sins (though that is true), but

for my sin. The root of sin that is in my nature, and that which worries and distresses the heart of the sincere believer daily, is put away for faith by death, and we are dead to it, as well as those sins that are committed; for the heart says, and rightly too, that God ought to condemn it, and trembles; now how is this to be met? By God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, or as a sacrifice for sin.

Then He condemned sin in the flesh, and put it away in Christ's sacrifice; thus the whole thing is settled, and that which was a weight on my spirit, and a thorn in my conscience is taken away by the very way in which the condemnation has run out in all its full force, in the crucifixion of Christ. God has settled the question, condemning the sin in you, which you condemn. But where has He done it? Outside of yourself altogether; for if God sets about delivering, He does it perfectly. If Christ has died, not only for your committed sins, but your sin in the flesh, it is real through redemption: for He does not leave us under our sins, but takes them away, and forgives them. And not only this, He takes away the condemnation of sin in the nature, by God's judgment being executed on the sinless flesh of the person of His own Son. Thus sin in my flesh is judged, as well as my committed sins. This is what the heart wants to be delivered from, and what it is in conflict with every day. The tree and the fruit— the root and the sap, that harasses the heart, is settled, and that by God sending His own Son. There was the greatest grace to meet it; and the very thing that harasses you most God has provided for in sending His own Son.

Well, then, in verse 3, I get the result of chapter 7 met. "In that the law was weak through the flesh, God

sending his own Son," etc. Well, but you say, I have sin working in me still, what am I to do? Why, the very thing that distresses you is the very thing that God gave His Son for, "and for sin" and so "condemned sin in the flesh." This it is that gives the real liberty to the Christian, not liberty to sin, but liberty from sin.

Verse 4. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." He is not taking up the old man here, but the walk; and mark, there are two principles of walk—after the flesh, and after the Spirit. Flesh is not changed; if it were, why be exhorted not to walk after it? But no; the flesh is the same as ever, but the believer now has power over it, he does not walk after it, although it be there. The flesh is in him, but he is not in the flesh. There is no excuse for a Christian walking in flesh, because the Spirit of Christ is in him. But, mark further; we all, even as believers, have the flesh, but that does not necessarily make the conscience bad, but I must have conflict with it, then it is no hindrance to communion; but if I yield to it, I get a bad conscience and lose communion, and I have to confess my sin before communion can be restored. For instance, if I have pride in my nature, that does not hinder communion, if I go to my Father and plead with Him about it, and ask Him to help me to keep it down, and walk in gracious humility, to deliver me; instead of losing communion, I have communion with God about it. But if there be neglect, instead of getting strength from God to overcome it, I may go out in the morning without carefulness and get my pride wounded: for if a person does not shew me as much respect as I think he ought, then my pride comes out in some unhappy manifestation, and my conscience

is defiled, and my communion with God hindered, and the Lord Himself dishonoured. The very fact of my having indwelling sin is but the occasion of communion, or a barrier to it, according as I am dead to it, seeking God's face, or yield to it.

Verse 5. "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." It is "after the Spirit," the man's condition is looked at here as spiritual. Every nature has its object, which is its "mind." There are two principles here, each having its own object; the very brute creation have their desires, the flesh its more deliberate objects. The spiritual man obeys the tastes and appetites of the Spirit instead of the flesh.

Verse 6. "To be carnally minded is death" (or, which is better, the mind of the flesh, and the mind of the Spirit. It is what each in its nature desires, not a state). If the flesh run its course, death, the seal of condemnation, must be upon it. "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment"; "but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace." Now we are getting the real, practical, inward thing. There are two kinds of peace—peace in the conscience, and peace in the heart. "To be spiritually-minded is life and peace." This is a far higher thing than simply peace in the conscience. It is peace in the heart and affections. The affections are at rest, and then there is the steady pursuit of things for which our consciences will not accuse us, for, delighting ourselves in the Lord, there will be peace. If you are restless and discontented in your mind, you are not at peace, you are thinking about yourselves! self has come in, so we want something for self. The Spirit turns the eye away from self towards the Lord. The things of the flesh are too

small to fill the heart, and the heart likewise needs enlarging to grasp the things of the Spirit; and herein is the contrast between Ecclesiastes and Canticles on this very point.

In Ecclesiastes, Solomon says, “There is no good thing under the sun”; “All is vanity and vexation of spirit.” Why so? To him, self was seeking its own satisfaction. Here, then, was no rest, no peace; it could not be otherwise. No human object could satisfy an immortal soul, nor could a dying man get rest in what he was to die out of. Yet, when thinking of himself, it was all I, I, I, I did it, and I found it vanity; but in Canticles we see all his blessedness, because he speaks of Christ being all to him there. As it has been said, in Ecclesiastes the heart was too great for the object; in Canticles the object is too great for the heart. We want a largeness of capacity for the enjoyment of God Himself; a largeness of capacity which none but God can give, and none but God can fill. Where that is, “life and peace “are. What peace and joy and communion a Christian, so walking, has in his heart! But when self comes in, even if we have assurance, there is no peace of heart, because there is always a liability to have it wounded, and if it be not, self is never content. If we know ourselves, we shall soon see that it is the central thought of every irritated heart.

Verse 7. “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God,” etc. Now, here we get a deeper thing still than law-breaking in itself; an unsubject will always is the spirit of hatred against Him to whom we feel we ought to be subject, and this brings on the full judgment of self; for while there may be peace of heart and peace of conscience, yet a man finds that the mind of the flesh is enmity against God, for he finds that he, according to

the flesh, has a will that will not be subject to God, and it would not be a will if it were. The flesh has not only desires, but a will that is not subject to the law of God, nor ever can be. The law not only declares right things, but also the authority of the Lawgiver, and that brings out the rebellion of the flesh, for the flesh immediately says, I will, and I won't. If you are guilty of breaking one commandment, you are guilty of all; for the unwillingness to submit is as much shewn in the breaking one, as in breaking all. I may require my child to obey in three things, and in two of them he may obey me, because he does not want to do otherwise; but in the third he does not obey, not liking to do it, and therefore takes his own way instead of submitting; the sin was in the will, for he was as guilty in disobeying me, as if he had disobeyed in all: "So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God," because of the will in the members.

Verse 9. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." Now we get the liberty, for you are not set in the flesh, but in the Spirit. This is the new nature having its source in the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost working in it. The man is not in the flesh, is not in that place, and standing, and nature before God (he does not say that flesh is not in the man), but in the Spirit; that is, all the Spirit delights in and descries, characterise the man before God, according to the nature and place he has in Christ, though there may be much failure in carrying it out. "If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." It is not merely God working for us, but in us. We are born of the Spirit, thus we get the new nature, but then, besides the new nature we want power and liberty, and therefore, consequent on redemption and our cleansing

by blood, the Holy Ghost, who is God, dwells there to work in the new nature, and this gives living power. For if I have the new nature only, this gives good desires, but I do not accomplish them, as in chapter 7; but here it is "if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." It is not merely that we have new thoughts and desires, but He, who is really God, dwells in us to give us power to accomplish them.

It is blessed to see how he brings in God as the real practical deliverance of the man who was before in the flesh. For it does not say, "if born of the Spirit," though that is true, but, "if the Spirit of God dwell in you," a truth founded on redemption, and our being delivered by it, cleansed through Christ's blood, so that the Holy Ghost can dwell in us, the power of God Himself working in us. And if the Spirit of God works powerfully in a man, when did it first work and manifest itself in the true and perfect path of a man before God? In Christ; so this is called now the Spirit of Christ, because shewn in the fruit, in walking like Christ, in the practical formal characteristics of meekness, lowliness, gentleness, obedience, heavenly-mindedness, etc., which the Spirit took in Christ (for these were the natural found characteristics of the Spirit in Christ), but formative in us of that which was so perfectly in Him.

Verse 10. "But if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin," that is, Christ being power and life in us, we take it for dead, for if alive, it only is and can be sin: "but the Spirit is life because of righteousness," its natural practical fruit; I only am and own that as life. That is, the old man in us (the body with a will is called the flesh) is as dead, shorn of will, for I judge it: but the

Spirit is life, already manifesting the fruits of righteousness in us, to the praise of the glory of God.

But, farther, the body itself will be raised. “He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” How entirely are the saints separated from this world! Even their resurrection is different; the world; that is, the wicked dead, will not be raised by the Spirit of Christ, but the just will be raised by His Spirit, for He dwells in them. “If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you” (here is the link), you will be raised because of the same Spirit dwelling in you. “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” Thus we have three aspects of the Holy Spirit: the Spirit of God contrasted with the flesh; the Spirit of Christ as characteristic of our walk in the world; and the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus, pledge of our resurrection—the triple character of the Spirit of God as given to the Christian. At the end of verse 11 we get the answer to verse 24, of chapter 7, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Here there is full deliverance, not only for the soul now, but for the body also. “He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” We shall be brought up to the very image of Christ; even our mortal bodies shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body. The liberty of glory is contrasted with the liberty of grace. Now we are in the liberty of grace, then in the liberty of the glory, the creature being sharer in the latter.

In speaking of the Spirit of God, He is spoken of up to verse 11 as being life, and after that as distinct from one’s life in Christ, as a present Person, as dwelling in

us and witnessing with our spirit. See how strikingly these two points of view are brought together in verse 27. It attributes the thoughts and feelings which God searches out to my heart, because it is in my heart that the Spirit works, but it goes on to the source: in my heart it finds the mind of the Spirit according to the doctrine of verses 5-7, which is wrought by the Holy Ghost; and lastly, it is the Holy Ghost Himself who makes intercession in the saints. It is me, because it is wrought in my new nature; but as to the power that wrought it, it is not me. The Holy Ghost does it in and by me. It is me as to the act, but it is He as to the source. We have the new nature given to us, and the Spirit is the source, nor is the stream separated from it; this is the teaching up to verse 11; but the Holy Ghost dwells in us. Well, a groan comes out, and I may not understand what to ask for, but through the Holy Ghost my groan is according to the mind of the Spirit, by the Spirit of God which is in me; but this brings in the last truth referred to, His intercession. It is the Spirit Himself in me; He makes intercession according to God, and "God that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." It is attributed to my heart, but to Him also that produced it. It is me, and at the same time it is the Holy Ghost. I have anticipated in my reference to this verse, because it made plain the doctrine of the indwelling of the Spirit of God. It is a sweet thing to know that the Searcher of hearts finds the Spirit's mind and intercession in us, in place of sin and the flesh.

We will now open out the doctrine itself. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit." The Spirit is life, as we have seen, but we must understand that we are sealed after we have believed. It will be said, "Yet, I

cannot believe without the Spirit." Most true, it is His work, we are born of God by His quickening power, through the word, whence also it is by faith; but, then, because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts. The indwelling of the Holy Ghost is a very different thing from the quickening power of the Spirit. The Old Testament saints were the subjects of this quickening power of the Spirit, but the indwelling of the Holy Ghost could not be till Jesus was glorified. Instances are given in the Acts, where there was an interval in time to make us sensible of the distinction of the two.

Well, there is a new nature, but there is neither strength nor power in it. We cannot act without the Spirit. The very characteristics of the new nature are dependence and obedience, and the Holy Ghost is the power in answer to this dependence, and hence it is we are led by the Spirit. The Spirit does not lead the flesh, but it teaches me to reckon it dead, and to mortify my members upon earth. Yet it is the whole man He leads, for I do not call the flesh me, if I reckon myself dead, but that is "if the Spirit of God dwell in you."

Then we are temples of the Holy Ghost, which is in us, which we have of God. A temple is that in which God dwells, and my body is this temple. Surely this is a most solemn motive against sin, for how can I go and defile God's temple? In John 14:16 the Lord says, "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." So also in John 16:7, He says, "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you." The first Comforter, Christ, did not dwell, that is, abide with them; He had to go away, and further, He was not in

them, but the other Comforter was, as He said, to dwell or abide with them, and should be in them. Christ was with them and went away; but the Holy Ghost, the other Comforter, was to be in them, and abide for ever. There is no strength in us to give power to the truth we receive, or to enjoy the things we have believed. But the Holy Ghost not only presents the things of Christ to us, but at the same time enables us to enjoy them, and to walk in the power of them.

In 1 Corinthians 2:12-14 we find three things about the Spirit. First, divine instruction received by the Spirit's revelation to the vessel of truth, verse 12, "Now we have received." Second, communicated to others by the Spirit, v. 13, "Which things also we speak." Third, spiritual capacity to discern; it also gives the truth living power in the souls of those who are taught, verse 14, "The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God." There is a solemn truth connected with this, namely, that the Comforter is really come, for He could not come till Jesus was glorified; and if the Holy Ghost is dwelling in us, we are called to walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Being born of God, and sprinkled with the redeeming blood of Christ, we get the Spirit indwelling. This blood is the foundation of His presence, for by it we are clean, and He can dwell there, the seal and witness of the value of Christ's work.

The Spirit was abundantly prophesied of in Ezekiel and Isaiah: "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed." Thus to the Jews there were abundant promises that there should be the pouring out of the Spirit; and the Spirit was the quickener of every saint in the Old Testament times: but now there is another thing, for the Holy Ghost is really given to us; and He could not be given till redemption

was fully accomplished. It was only promised till then, as Israel well knew; but it was promised, and therefore Nicodemus ought to have known that, “except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” But there is another thing, besides being born again, upon the coming down of the Holy Ghost, the seal was upon the value of Christ’s work. The seal was not put upon what we had done (our real fruits are the fruits of the Spirit, when we already have it), but upon what Christ did. The Lord’s own anointing, when baptized, was the seal to His personal perfectness—“Him hath God the Father sealed.” But then, could He put the Holy Ghost on me? No; this would be sealing the flesh; but on Him: “After that ye believed, ye were sealed.”

The Holy Ghost was also given to testify of Christ’s glory as the risen Man. In Acts 2:33 we see Christ taking the place of the Head of the body, the church, at the right hand of God, having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost. Thus we see the gift of the Holy Ghost was entirely dependent on Christ taking His place at the right hand of God, as we read in John 15:26, “Whom I will send unto you from the Father”; and the effect of this was felt in the apostles. There was a total difference in them before and after Pentecost. They then preached Jesus crucified. Were they afraid? No; Peter goes and charges those who had denied Him with being guilty of a damning sin, when Peter had committed the same in a much worse way himself (having been His companion) in denying Him; and how could he do this? His own conscience was purged, for Christ had died in the interval, and the Holy Ghost had been given, and thus he, who before followed trembling (Mark 10:32), had

power now; for he had none before. As it is said, “When they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, they marvelled,” Acts 4:13. I am not speaking of miracles, the mighty signs and wonders that were wrought by the power of the Spirit of God (Rom. 15: I9)j but of the boldness in which the apostles spake after that they received the Holy Ghost. As we see all through the Acts, the boldness in which the apostles spake and acted was not the boldness of the flesh, but that of the Spirit of God in them.

We have a beautiful type in Aaron (looked at as Christ) who was anointed without blood. But the sons of Aaron (the church) must be sprinkled with the blood and oil. So the leper was first sprinkled with blood, and then over that with oil. Christ was anointed down here, which was the seal of His own personal perfection before the blood had been shed. But we, when we believe the atonement, are anointed and sealed, because of, and as a testimony to, the value of His work; “He that establisneth us with you in Christ, and anointeth us, is God.” Christ sends the Holy Ghost, and the Father sends the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost is in us as the Spirit of adoption. The effect is to connect us with all the glory into which Christ will bring His church, and to associate us with Him now in the place where He is in the presence of the Father, and this as the children of the Father. And this truth, that the Spirit is sent to us and in us, gives the character of our walk down here.

We are to mind the things of the Spirit; and what are they? Anything in this world? No, nothing, if it be not His service there. “He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” He gives us the knowledge of past redemption, present joy and peace, and future glory. The

Holy Ghost teaches us the glory of the cross after we have known its saving power, for then we are inside the cross. Whatever is morally glorious: you see it in the cross—love, obedience, righteousness, holiness; law, and whatever was morally bad, met there too, condemnation, sin, and death. God and sin met together in the person of Christ on the cross, but in the way of redemption for us, while it enhances the iniquity of sin.

When I have found peace, then I can say, “Now is the Son of man glorified” (and so He ought to be), and now He has accomplished that work, and is gone on high, and we have glory in Him; and surely there is no joy like that into which we are brought, the joy of knowing that, in that act of deepest suffering for my salvation, Christ and God were most fully glorified. If Christ suffered all that agony for my sin and vileness, surely there never was a moment in which God could look on Him with greater delight than this. And I have now got all the effect of this; I am the fruit of the travail of Christ’s soul. The light of God’s love rests upon Christ Himself, and we are in Him— “I am in my Father, ye in me, and I in you.” We have the blessing of union with Him now, and there is but one thing more—to be with Him for ever. The Comforter is the perpetual remembrancer of that word, “So shall we ever be with the Lord.” The church is to be brought to Christ, as Eliezer went to fetch Rebekah to Isaac; and as all along the road he was telling her of the one to whom she was going, just so the Holy Ghost is leading us in the way, the cross being the starting-point, giving the whole character of the road all along the journey answering to it, while He is telling us of the Father’s house, and place of the heavenly Bridegroom.

There may be trial in the way, but what is all that but dung and dross to the heart whose affections are on Christ? Poor Rebekah, if she thought of her father's house, where was she? In the wilderness, with a stranger, and an uncertain future; but if she thought of what was before her, then it was all joy and certainty as to the future. The cross is the very commencement of this journey, as separating us from the world, and if we would know the Spirit's power in our souls, we must keep in the narrow path of separation from the world all the journey through. Do not make the wilderness the object of your hearts (Israel did this); or at least do not rest in it. You may desire earthly good, and you may get leanness into your soul: "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die"; but let our walk down here be like Paul's, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." Let us be so pressing on to the glory, that everything in this world may be things behind us, that we have left, turning our back on. We are going to Christ, and He will present us to Himself, and to the Father, without blemish and without spot, for He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

We have before noticed that there are three parts in this chapter—three distinct subjects. First, the work of the Spirit of God in us, the effect produced in ourselves, as the power of life, even to the resurrection of the body; that it was the fruit and operation of God's Spirit in us extending to the resurrection. Second, it is not only the effect that is produced in living power in us by the Holy Ghost, but the presence of the Holy Ghost Himself in us, distinguishing between that which is born of the Spirit and the personal indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Third,

what God is for us in His outward operations. The moral effect of this is, not only that God has worked in me by the Spirit and thereby put me in a certain position, but that the Holy Ghost is with me in that position; what God is for me also, so as to secure and bless him in whom He has wrought. It is not merely that a certain work is wrought in me, but God is in me, for me, and with me. Thus, first, there is that which God has done with me; second, what God is in me; and third, what God is for me.

This last is brought out at the end of the chapter: what God is for man, and not what man is for God, but man looked at as a saint; for when the apostle has brought distinctly out what man is, then he brings out what God is for man, such as he is, as a sinner, summed up in chapter 5; and then what the position of the saint is in his life and trials, and God in and for him as such. Therefore God is fully set forth, that our hearts may rest in what He is, and not in what we are. The rejection of God's Son proved what man is; but those who believe rest on what grace is, as we saw at the end of chapter 5; and now, made alive to God, they know their position with God according to His predestinating power, and the glory to come. Faith rests on what God is, and on what God has done, as shewing what He is withal; God has quickened us and sanctified us, and we have a place with God through this, but what is wrought in me is not the object of faith: faith rests on what God is, as thus revealed in His word, which is our warrant for believing. 2 The witness in power is the Holy Ghost. It is not only believing that the Spirit quickens, but that we stand before God in the Spirit according to the place He has given us actually in Christ, and that if we believe in what

God has done, in that He has quickened the dead, and brought into His presence with power Him who had gone down under death for our sins, when everything was against us (for sin can nowhere be shewn out as it was on the cross, when He who hung there was made sin and a curse for us), and that we know He is now the very delight of God—a man in heaven— not only as to His person, but His work, we are brought thus to see what sinners we were—lost sinners—transgressors from the womb; but at the same time, to see His grace which has wrought deliverance, and that we are placed in Him who is thus accepted. And God has so brought out and applied to our hearts all this grace, that we can now say, "God is for us," for this is the great general truth at the end of chapter 8; the Holy Ghost giving us to understand it by bringing it home to our hearts, in the conviction of what we are in ourselves, and in Christ; what God is, and that He is for us, "What shall we say to these things? if God be for us, who can be against us?"

The testimony of the gospel always comes to convince of sin, but at the same time to speak of His grace—what God is for us; but then, it must be received by faith, for we have no power in ourselves to enjoy God, and it would never be properly faith if it were not by God's power, as it is said, "We are kept by the power of God through faith," but why through faith? Because faith leads my soul into the understanding of His love. Thus leading the heart to trust in Him, and not in ourselves, in a way that makes us understand and prize what God is (not in the heart's love to Him, but in His love to it), as known in all the dealings of His grace, keeping us by His power; not keeping as we keep a precious jewel, which is unintelligent and uninterested in all our care, but as

creating an answer in our hearts to what He does. His power never fails: we are kept by that, but it is through faith, that we may have the enjoyment of it, as being brought to delight ourselves in Him, by whom we are kept.

In the three things brought out in this chapter, we have, first, the new nature, which has spiritual faculties, capable of enjoying God; as a child, for instance, has the capacity of enjoying its relationship to the parent, but must also be in the relationship to have the affection in exercise; so we are conscious of our place through redemption, but then we want power, because the new nature is a dependent nature. The first man sought to be independent, and so became the slave of the devil; the second man did nothing of Himself, He came to obey—He took the form of a servant. It is the same place we are in, and having a dependent nature, we want power as we have seen in chapter 7, where there is a new nature "delighting in the law of God after the inward man," but neither object nor power; for we must have something to love, and then power to love it, for in chapter 7 the soul has neither Christ nor the Holy Ghost till the end of it, when he finds the Lord Jesus Christ, and then exclaims, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," and because he can say, "There is no condemnation." Now, the soul has got an object, and it has got power, Christ revealing the Father and the Spirit, and it is no longer a question of conscience. It is not that he is without a conscience, but his conscience is purged by the blood of Jesus, and then there is the power of the Spirit of God in him, and having the new nature, there is the development of God's things in us, by the power of the Holy Ghost; for the Holy Ghost takes

of the things of Christ and shews them to us, and is the power in us also to understand them, as the Lord said, “He shall take of mine and shew it unto you,” and “shall be in you.”

It is the presence of the Holy Ghost with a soul that has been quickened and knows redemption, having submitted to the righteousness of God, and not as quickening the soul at conversion, which is the subject here; nor is it the Spirit, as He is with the church, which truth is taught in another place, but it is the presence of the Holy Ghost in man, in the believer; as the great subject of the epistle to the Romans is, how God can be just and the justifier of the sinner, and man stand accepted before Him—the relation of an individual soul with God. Therefore the great fundamental truth is what man is for God, and what God is for man, and lastly, what through grace man becomes before God. In the early chapters we saw what man in his natural state is for God; in chapter 5 what God is for the sinner; but in chapter 8 what man is in Christ is brought out, and thus what God is for him, as in this place— “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God”; he does not say as many as are quickened by the Spirit, though that is true, for they must be quickened, before they can be led by the Spirit. They are also sealed; then again, if they are led by the Spirit they are not under the law, but, being sons of God, they are led by the Spirit of God. For the Christian is looked at here in his own place, according to the word. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.

In John’s Gospel we see, as truly as the Son was sent from heaven, so truly was the Holy Ghost sent from heaven; the Father sent the Son, and the Father and the

Son sent the Holy Ghost; the office of the Holy Ghost is quite distinct from the work of the Son come in the flesh. We will now refer to some passages in John's Gospel, that we may understand it. In chapter 16:7, He says, "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you" —a living mighty agent, God the Spirit, who comes down and dwells with you, and is in you, and He remains. Christ must go away, but He shall abide with us, and be in us.

Of the Holy Ghost the Lord says, "whom the Father will send in my name," and again, "whom I will send from the Father"; that is, Christ obtains it for us, and the Comforter comes from the Father to put us, through that name, in relationship with the Father; then secondly, Christ sends Him from His Father, and the Holy Ghost comes to tell us all the glory into which Christ has entered as Man. But, that we may be distinct and clear upon the subject, we will look at John 14:16. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever"; and then, verse 17, "for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you"; and then, in verse 20, "At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you." The Holy Ghost in thus coming down gives to the believer the consciousness of being in Christ, and His being in them, "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." The disciples ought to have known that He was in the Father, and the Father in Him, as He said, Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? (v. 10). But they could not know while He was on the earth of the fulfilment of these words, "ye in me, and I in you." As He says, "At that day ye shall know," etc.; then in verse 26,

“The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name.” Here we have the Father sending in the Lord’s name; and in chapter 15:26, “When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father”; and then in chapter 16:13, “when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he shall shew you things to come.”

Here, then, in John 16 we get the fulfilment of this great promise, that the Holy Ghost was to come down to reveal Christ, and to abide for ever; for here the Holy Ghost is looked at as upon the earth, telling of the things He has heard, taking of the things of Christ, and shewing them unto us; thus carrying on the whole work in our hearts, and then that He is to abide with us for ever: for the efficacy of Christ’s work must fail, God must fail, before the Holy Ghost could be taken away, as it is in virtue of our being sprinkled with the blood of Christ, that the Holy Ghost is given. The Holy Ghost is in us, in virtue of the work of Christ, being the great testimony of God’s estimate of the value of the blood of Christ, and of the glorification of the Man Jesus. We may grieve Him, and hinder His operations in us (alas! we do grieve Him), nevertheless, that cannot drive Him from us, as His presence in the individual is not in consequence of the condition of the individual, but in virtue of the blood of Christ, and that must be given up before the Holy Ghost could be removed; for the anointing oil, when the leper was cleansed, was put upon the blood; as Peter also teaches when he says, 1 Peter 1:12, “By them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.” The

Holy Ghost came down upon the person of the Lord when He was upon earth at His baptism, as a seal of His personal perfection, “him hath God the Father sealed”; but when He ascended up on high He received it for others (Acts 2:33), and therefore promised (Acts 1:5), “Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence”; which actually came to pass at Pentecost. See Acts 2. So also in John 7:39, “This spake he of the Spirit,” which, in virtue of redemption, they were to receive, “for the Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.”

In Acts 19:2, Paul asks, “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” They answer, “We have not yet heard whether the Holy Ghost is come.” They were John’s disciples, and therefore it was not that they questioned the existence of the Holy Ghost, for indeed, every thoughtful Jew acknowledged the Holy Ghost as spoken of by the prophets; but they had not heard whether the Holy Ghost had come in power, as spoken of in John 7; and according to the words of John the Baptist: “He shall baptise with the Holy Ghost,” Matt. 3:11. So again in Galatians, “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father”; and in Ephesians, “After that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” In these two passages we have the same truth taught, having got redemption through His blood, they have the Holy Ghost as the seal and the earnest of the inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.

The Holy Ghost was obtained by the work of Christ, and given to those who believe in consequence of faith, the seal of God set on those who believe in that work. Being

sprinkled by that blood we can be sealed; the blood being that on which the anointing of oil comes,3 as the seal of that work, which God had wrought in Christ, and the earnest of the glory to come; while the soul rests on that work of which the Holy Ghost is the seal. The Holy Ghost is the strength of fellowship in two ways, giving us first the knowledge of present favour, as adopted children; and secondly, of our union with Christ: our forming part of the body or bride of Christ. Thus we have seen redemption accomplished; the present work of the Holy Ghost in us; and glory in prospect. And if you are to bear fruit, you must be both quickened, and have the Holy Ghost; for others must see the fruit by my life, because they cannot see the faith.

In 2 Corinthians 1:20, 21, “All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” And mark the power and blessing of these two little words, “by us.” Now, could this be said of us unless we had the Holy Ghost giving us the blessed knowledge and consciousness of our place? “Now he which establisheth us with you, in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts,” v. 22. He hath planted us in Christ, and hath anointed us, and hath sealed us for the day of redemption, and given the earnest of it in our hearts.

In verses 15 and 16 of Romans 8, he says, “Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” In these two verses the blessed Comforter, who dwells in us, associates Himself with us, to witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; working in our hearts, and creating in us the confidence and proper affections of a child to the Father. As the Holy Ghost in

me is the power by which I cry, Abba, Father; so He also reveals the object that attracts my best affections.

The Holy Ghost always reasons downwards, from God to man, for He reveals what God is, and therefore He says, “If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” If God has made you His children, will He leave you without an inheritance? In truth He will not; but the moment you bring God in, then you get the consequences down here. For if you get all this glory, you must have the cross here, for we do not have a half Christ; “If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together”: and mark what stress he lays on the word with, “joint-heirs with Christ,” “suffer with Christ,” “glorified with him.” It is thought by some to be a great attainment to see the union of Christ and His church, but it was living association with Christ that was presented in the words, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” And Saul was arrested and converted along with the revelation of Jesus Himself, by the knowledge of the fact that those whom he was persecuting were the members of Christ’s body. It could not be said of Paul, “Ye have been with me from the beginning,” for Paul saw the Lord only in glory, and therefore he says, he did not know Christ after the flesh.

Well, then, you are members of Christ’s body, of His flesh, and of His bones; therefore you must have His portion down here, as well as up there. If we have fellowship with Him in the whole spirit and tone of our minds, we must suffer as Christ did in passing through this world, seeing the sin and misery all around us, or it may be sorrow on account of the state of the church. All this must make one go through the world as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; not merely suffering

for Him, though that is the highest condition, no doubt, but suffering with Him; it is the necessary consequence of being associated with Christ.

The world's joy can have no place in our hearts, if walking in fellowship with Christ, for if we go on with the world, Christ will not accompany us there. Jesus groaned down here, and deeply, in spirit, and so do we, as part, too, as regards our bodies, of the groaning creation; but does this set aside the word of our Lord, "that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves? "No, not in the least; for there is still joy by reason of the effect of God's presence in the soul, as an earnest withal of the inheritance of glory, which makes me say, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed to us." But, then, the effect of the blessedness of God's presence gives a deep and sorrowful sense of God's absence from those around, and of the passions and miseries which sin has brought in; every misery becomes a groan in my heart, every sorrow presses on my spirit, because it is a sign how sin has come in, and has ruined all man's natural blessings, and made him more than a stranger to all spiritual ones.

The more my heart understands what God's presence is, the more deeply my soul will understand the place the creature has got into. What a wonderful position this puts us into, one of association with God! When Christ passed through the world, did He screen Himself from sorrows? No, not even from death: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels"; But did He do it? No; He went through the midst of it—suffered it all. He ate and drank with publicans and sinners; He

went to the grave of Lazarus, and groaned, because He saw and felt the power of death on all around. But He passed through it all in the power of love. As to the condition of the world, we are glad in one sense, that as it is, it is not God's, though we know it will be by-and-by, when taken out of the hands of the usurper. It would be too sorrowful to think it was God's now.

Verse 23. "Even we ourselves groan within ourselves." As far as the body is concerned, I am connected with the creation, and therefore subject to vanity, sickness, and death: but still, I have the Holy Ghost in me, and He groans in me, so that my groaning is not selfishness, but groaning in a divine way, according to God, which is the second effect of the power of the Holy Ghost in me. He bears witness to what we are, first, as children and heirs; and then, by the power of the Holy Ghost, I have a sense of the vanity of this perishing world and everything in it. Christ suffered for righteousness as well as for sin. In the first kind, we are called to have fellowship with Him. It is that which He endured through the whole of His course down here. The latter suffering, for sin, we could have no part in; this He endured alone upon the cross, as that beautiful passage in Peter suggests, "For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing than for evil doing. For Christ hath also once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

But our part in sorrow here flows thus also from the sense of the subjection of all around us to vanity and the bondage of corruption. It is a very sorrowful thought. We do not hear that Jesus ever smiled. Weep He did, He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. But it was because He was heavenly, and love, yet also because He

was a man. And we have to remember that in us this feeling flows, when a right one, from the same causes. We are partakers of the divine nature by exceeding great and precious promises; the Spirit is life as the spring to the rill, and the Spirit of God dwells in us, making us know we are sons and heirs of God. This we have seen: as heirs, we shall be in glory like Christ, and the creation is waiting for our manifestation, for it was not by its will it was subjected, but through us. But to the groaning creation we are united in our bodies; we draw our sense of the sorrow from more than our being lookers on, and we feel for it from more than selfish grief, we feel for it through the Holy Ghost according to God. Our groans are well the groans of our hearts, but they are the mind of the Spirit, and more, the groans of the Spirit in us, a divine sense of the sorrow around us, yet in the sympathy of a human heart, the mind, too, of the Spirit as acting thus in man. Thus when God searches the heart, He finds my heart with divinely given feelings, and this He loves;' the mind of the Spirit, which meets His holy requirements, is acceptable to Him, and the intercession of the Spirit itself for the saints. But it does not follow that our intelligence can estimate the evil or know a remedy, yea, till Christ comes, there may not be a remedy possible. But the heart is formed after God's in respect of the need and sorrow, and this is very precious.

As regards ourselves, it leads to another clear judgment and consciousness as to our position. Our portion we have not, but our blessed apprehension of it by the Spirit, is what gives us the clear consciousness of the existing evil and sorrow, but then it gives us also the consciousness, that, while yet having it all only in hope,

we await only the redemption of our body to be in our glorious estate. There is no doubt as to our title, no question as to the salvation of our souls, no uncertainty as to the possession of what we hope for. We do not see it, that is the reason we hope, not because it is doubtful. It rests on God's word, and Christ's work, and we have the seal and earnest of the Spirit. Further, the power of evil does not give weariness or impatience: we wait with patience for that we do not see, because it is settled; of that patience we have need. Meanwhile, as we have seen, the Spirit helps our infirmities; and this brings out another glorious and precious truth, and ground of assurance.

We have seen the spiritual man, feeling according to God the burden of corruption on creation, but not knowing what to ask as a remedy: yet if we do not know what to ask for, we do know that for those that love God all things work together for good, even for those who are called according to His purpose. For we have now brought before us not the state of things through sin, but the purpose of God as regards the objects of that purpose, in the midst of that state of things, and in bringing them to glory.

In general the epistle to the Romans deals with man's responsibility, and God's blessed remedy in Christ, but here the epistle rises up to the purpose of God formed before the responsibility began; it reaches to the point where that to the Ephesians begins. The saints are called according to this purpose. Compare Titus 1:1, 2; and 2 Tim. 1:9. God foreknew these persons and predestinated them to a state equally in His purpose, for the glory of Christ, namely, to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among

many brethren. Wonderful place! but the place of God's counsels for them, who works all things after the counsels of His own will, not relative to anything that we are, save as connected with Christ's becoming a man; but the fruit of God's will, so that we measure it by that. But how blessed for us, not only as intrinsic glory, but as likeness to, and association with, Christ, the Son of God! He is the firstborn among many brethren. Such is the counsel of God— to associate us with Christ, in the place of sons, and conform us to the image of Him, the firstborn. Our responsibility was as children of the first Adam; the purpose of God concerning us in connection with the last Adam. This is a glorious and blessed truth. "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Being in this place, we are, then, anew responsible to shew forth the life of Christ, and glorify Him; but this is founded on the possession of life. This purpose God pursues and accomplishes. Whom He has predestinated to this, He calls; whom He calls, He justifies: whom He justifies, He glorifies. He carries it on to the end. We have nothing here of sanctifying. The true Christian life, the life of the Spirit, has been fully expounded in the early part of the chapter. Here it is God for us, not His living work in us, nor the presence of the Holy Ghost; these are the two subjects treated in the previous part of the chapter. We are now at the third part—God for us, His securing those thus quickened according to His purpose, from purpose before the world on to glory, the actual introduction to blessing being by God's own calling: all is the blessed fruit of God's being for us. This is the triumphant question of the apostle, "If God be for us, who can be

against us? “The great and blessed truth, the result of all his inquiries and discussions, which have led him up from the responsibility of man through the activity of God in grace, bringing him out of the condition man was responsible in (while effectually meeting that responsibility by the precious work of Christ, maintaining it, but clearing us of our guilt) up to the purpose of God as to us, and thus closing with the blessed testimony that God is for us. But this last is also fully and beautifully developed. First, we have the great principle, and the absolute security it affords: “If God be for us, who can be against us?” His being for us precludes the thought of any being against us to any real effect.

But further—God being for us is considered, in giving, in justifying, and in all that, as difficulty or danger, might seem to hem our way, or separate us from His love. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” See how again, as remarked elsewhere, the Spirit reasons from what God is and has done, to consequent blessing to us, not from us to God. That is true in judgment; but in grace it is from God in all its fruits to us. He has not spared His Son, to give everything else, is, after that, a simple thing.

Next, as to accusation. We are God’s elect: who shall lay anything to our charge? God will not be in fault in choosing us for blessing. It is He Himself that justifies (not here, note, justified in His sight, or before Him); but He justifies, who shall condemn? Little matter if anybody does. But then, as to the assurance of love in spite of the difficulties and dangers in the way, all is met, and the very witness of love is in it. It is Christ that died, yea

rather, that is risen again, who makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from His love? He has considered our whole case, gone Himself into what was needed for it, but has triumphed, and is now risen, and sits as Man at the right hand of God, the sure guarantee of the full and blessed result, and is now occupied with carrying on our cause on high. He has gone down into the depths for us, He is at God's right hand securing all for us; He enters now into all our case here in intercession.

What is to separate us from His love? Difficulties there may and will be, but we shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved us; they are but the occasion of a sure display of His faithfulness and love who has entered into all, and now lives for us. Death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, or depth, all may be passed in review; creatures high and low, death, or fife, which may seem ever so dangerous; but all creatures, or whatever may befall us, cannot separate from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord; creatures are less in power, are nothing compared with Him; death is the proof of His love, and of our being with Him, in life, living by Him, because He lives.

Divine love is above all, or proved in all, and in one who has shewn it in perfect interest in us. Nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. The triumphant security of God being for us, a God who gives His own Son, who justifies; and who shall condemn? A love almighty as God's, but manifested in human sorrows, in Jesus, yet in Jesus the Overcomer, to whom all is subjected: such is the source and security of blessing which keeps and enriches our hope. God is

for us. This closes the doctrinal part of the epistle; a supplementary instruction was needed and is given, before the apostle turns to practical exhortation.

Chapters 9-11.

What about the promises made to the Jews, that is, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? That the Jews had broken the law, and were guilty, was plain enough—guilty beyond the Gentiles: their mouth was stopped. But God's mouth had spoken: what about His promises? "No difference" could not be said there; faithfulness could not be wanting on His part. This subject is now treated: how to reconcile the "no difference "doctrine, and special promises on God's part to the Jews. Chapter 9, beginning with the deepest expression of heart interest in God's people, of whom he was himself one, treats the question of Israel's hereditary claim, and the admission of the Gentiles to blessing. Chapter 10 tells how Israel lost the blessing, and the plain testimonies of the prophets as to it. Chapter 11 presents the question: is their present rejection final? and shews it is not, and that they will be re-established as a nation.

In the beginning of chapter -9 the apostle recalls carefully all the privileges of the beloved people. Far from him was the wish to diminish their importance, or deny God's delight in them; so far from indifference, in his ardent heart he had loved them as much as Moses, who would have been blotted out of God's book rather than not see them forgiven. All divinely conferred privileges were really theirs: and it was not that the word of God had taken none effect; but all were not Israel who were of Israel; nor, because they were the natural seed of Abraham, were they all children, that is,

according to promise. And here he has just glided, in admitting their privileges, into the heart of his whole argument. The natural seed were not heirs, because they were the natural seed. If that were so, the question was really solved. And this he goes on to prove. Ishmael was the natural seed, but sovereign grace maintained its prerogative. In Isaac shall thy seed be called; but the Jewish objector might say, Yes, but Hagar was a slave, and Ishmael slave-born. Well, but take Esau and Jacob of one mother, that is an unexceptionable case. Yet Jacob was chosen, not Esau, and it was of pure grace, before they had done good or evil. The circumstances were natural, but the principle, pure sovereign grace, is to set aside the national pretensions of the Jews. They must let in Ishmaelites and Edomites, or allow God to be sovereign.

Then they would, as now, accuse God of unrighteousness. His answer is, sovereign mercy alone has spared you. If God had not retreated into His own sovereignty, and said, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, all Israel, save Moses or Joshua, would have been cut off at Sinai. They existed as a people only by virtue of this sovereignty. That sovereignty God would now use in favour of Gentiles, whom He called along with Jews. As to the general question, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. He hardened, when He saw fit to display judgment, those who despised Him. And if one demanded, why He yet then found fault? The answer is, You judge God! Who are you, a man, to reply to Him, and find fault with God?

There is, then, the unqualified assertion of God’s power to make vessels of dishonour, if He pleased, but careful

avoidance of the thought that He had made any. What if He had borne with vessels fitted to destruction, all ready for it; but made known the riches of His glory to vessels He had afore prepared for mercy? There is the maintenance of God's absolute prerogative. No reasoning allowed to weaken, or even call in question, the patience of God, with vessels fitted for destruction; and purposes of glory, for which God prepares the vessels of mercy. Thus the claim of Israel to hereditary privileges— to the exclusion of the Gentiles, was barred. It involved the admission of those He would not hear of, races forbidden to enter to the tenth generation; and shewing also, that they were excluded themselves, if they did not admit the absolute sovereignty of God. The apostle applies this sovereignty to the call of the Gentiles along with the remnant of Israel, confirming his doctrine.

From verse 27 he confirms this reasoning by positive quotations from the prophets. Esaias declared that a remnant should be saved, that, if a very small one had not been left, Israel would have been as Sodom and Gomorrah; and shews the real cause of this. They had sought indeed righteousness, but it was by their own works, and rejected Christ, stumbling at the stumbling-stone, as it was written: while the Gentiles, who sought it not, had come in under mercy, for whosoever believed in Him would not be ashamed. Into this subject, in respect of Israel, and God's ways with them, and His testimony to those ways, he enters more fully in chapter 10.

But a few remarks remain to be made on chapter 9, besides the general view I have taken of it. There is progress in the assertion of God's prerogative, though

the object of the assertion of it be His title to have mercy on the Gentiles. In Ishmael and Isaac it is the simple denial of hereditary right. All are not Israel who are of Israel; but it goes no farther than promise. It is not the children after the flesh, but according to promise —Isaac, not Ishmael. But in Esau and Jacob the principle of simple sovereignty comes in. Both were children of Isaac, and alike so, but the elder was to serve the younger. Jacob was chosen according to the purpose of God. And thereupon the principle of sovereignty is asserted in verse 15, still only in view of mercy. It is not of him that wills, nor him that runs, but of God that shews mercy. And this applies to hardening (not to making evil), so that He has mercy on whom He will, and hardens, to display His righteous judgment, whom He will. And the reply to objections is, not first, explanation, but putting man in his place, and God in His.

It is not man's place to judge God: none can say to Him, What doest Thou? He is the potter, with power over the clay to make what He pleases. But once man is silenced, then there is explanation. What if He bears, with great long-suffering, with vessels fitted for destruction, as He did with Pharaoh; as He did with the Amorites and Canaanites; and prepared, as He had to do, if He would have any, vessels of mercy for glory? And so He called from among lost Gentiles, for that is the key to the exercise of His sovereignty, and Jews were really the same, to be His children in grace. Such is the unfolding of this principle of sovereign grace, without which not one soul would be saved, for none understand, none seek after God, not one of himself will come that he

might have life. Judgment is according to works; salvation and glory are the fruit of grace.

But to return to God's ways with Israel: chapter 10. The apostle now declares, not merely the privileges of Israel, but his earnest desire that they might be saved; they have zeal towards God, but not the knowledge of His ways. Their fall lay in this: they sought to establish their own righteousness by works, and did not submit to the righteousness of God. How strange, yet how fitting a word! If we are to go up, as responsible, to judgment, it must be by our works. We are judged according to them. But we are sinners, and there is no possibility of our standing on this ground; yet this our pride will not admit.; it will hope to bring it about, if it does not possess it. Grace provides righteousness for us. We have it not for God, He has it for us, and gratuitously in Christ; and we have to own that we cannot in any way make good our own case with God, and must submit to His righteousness. This, neither the Jew, nor man in any age, by his own spirit will do. He will blame it as a way of sin, as if he really cared for holiness; but finds he must come down, and confession come in.

Now the apostle shews that the ruin of Israel was supposed in their own law. The law gave the intelligible principle— "do and live"; but after having done that, and shewn ruin and judgment on failure, it speaks of the return of the heart to God, when under the effects of the judgment, and when the plainly revealed ground of legal righteousness was over (Deut. 30). And the apostle then introduces Christ, as the true object, when once this was the case; the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Just as all hope of righteousness by doing was over in the case put in Deuteronomy, so in

every heart, when honestly given up, as it must be by everyone that knows himself, instead of judgment, we have in grace, on the part of God, Christ for righteousness, and the law done with, an end to it; while its judgment was sanctioned, righteousness introduced by grace, on another ground, and as to this, an end of the law. And in fact, Christ is the end of the law, and another ground of relationship with God. So it is believing on, and confessing Him, the Lord Jesus, and we are saved. But then this lets in everyone that does so, and the national relationship drops. “Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” And now, as before, we had “no difference,” in that all have sinned, now we have “no difference,” in that the same Lord is rich unto all that call upon Him. Sin had levelled all alike before God. Grace raises up all alike through faith. And so it is written, “Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved,” and so, a Gentile, if he call.

And this brings in the testimony and belief through the word, with the question of the bearing of this on Jew and Gentile. They must believe, to call; and hear, to believe. It is a report, a testimony, to the Jew as to the Gentile; and so their scriptures spoke of Him who brought good tidings, and hailed them. All had not believed; and this proved it was a report even to the Jew, and it was gone out into all the world. This is the general thought. Then, specifically applying it to Israel, Moses had plainly declared they would be provoked to anger by them that were no people, and God would be found of the Gentile who sought Him not. And as to Israel, there was no want of grace, but grace they had rejected. God had stretched out His hands all the day to a disobedient and gainsaying people.

We now come in chapter 11 to the assurance, that, in spite of all this, God has not cast away His people. All Israel, that is, Israel as a people, will be saved. In shewing this, the apostle gives most solemn instruction, and urgent warning to the Gentiles. The apostle's own heart answers the question, and he is himself a proof that God had not cast away Israel; just as in Elias's time, when he interceded against Israel, as wholly gone, God had an election out of it: so now the apostle was the proof of it, and there were others too, besides him. Only it was by grace, not works—the theme he ever insists on. The election had obtained what Israel was seeking for; the rest were blinded, as the prophets had said they would be. Was then this stumbling at the stumbling-stone, which brought in judicial blindness on the people, in order that they should fall, and be finally rejected? In nowise. Moses had told of old in Deuteronomy 32, that it would so happen, for the letting in of the Gentiles, to provoke Israel to jealousy. But if to provoke to jealousy, it was not to reject. This was second proof of his thesis—that God's people Israel were not cast off. And if being brought low was for the blessing of the world, what would the future restoration and fulness be, but as life from the dead for this poor dark sin-stricken world?

The apostle magnifies his office of apostle to the Gentiles, by shewing its bearing thus on the Jews to put the Gentiles in their place, and guard them against the pride of supposed superiority in the flesh. And here comes in the solemn warning addressed to them. The stock of promise, beginning with Abraham, was naturally carried out in this world in the Jews; the root bore the branches, the Gentiles had no ground for pride. Abraham was the root of promise, and Israel the natural

branches. Some had been broken off; true, because of unbelief, and the Gentiles had been graffed into a root to which they did not naturally belong; and they were graffed in on the principle of faith, contrary to nature, as the old branches had been broken off for unbelief. The Gentiles stood thus only on the ground of faith; if, therefore, as a body they departed from it—did not continue in God's goodness, which, contrary to nature (for the question is not of the body of Christ, but their outward connection with the place of promise in this world) had graffed them into the olive tree of promise, to partake of its root and fatness, they would be in turn broken off.

We have here nothing to do with the church, or union with Christ; but with the tree of promise in this world, beginning with Abraham, to whom and to whose seed the promises were made. Goodness, on the principle of faith, had given Gentiles a part in these, which the Jewish branches had lost, but the stock was not Gentile, but Abrahamic and Jewish, and what the Gentiles had by faith, they would lose by the want of it. And such were God's counsels. God was bringing in by this means a number of Gentiles, and for yet better things, and when by this outward system of Gentile association with the promises their number was complete, the time of the blindness which had come upon Israel as a nation, for that purpose, would be over, and Israel as a whole, as a nation, would be saved. God would give them, not then, as such, the heavenly portion of the church, which is not here in question, but graff them back into the place of promise, the enjoyment of what the root Abraham bore in blessing. And that would be by the coming of Christ, who would turn away ungodliness from Jacob. What is

taught here, then, is a tree on the earth with Abraham for its root, who, when God had formed the nations, and all had fallen into idolatry, had been called out from among them, according to election, to be father (or root) of a race blessed with the promises of God.

Israel was the natural heir according to the flesh; but when He, in whom the accomplishment of these promises is, came, they rejected Him through unbelief, and were broken off, the election continuing in the place of promise (not added to the church here); Gentiles were graffed in contrary to nature, to enjoy the blessing of Abraham—those very nations out of which Abram had been called. This was by faith, not by descent of nature. If they left this, they would be cut off, cease to have, as so called, the promises on earth—at any rate, they were not to boast against the branches, for the root bore them, not they the root, and the cut-off branches could and would be graffed in again, that is, Israel restored in its original place in the enjoyment of promise. As regards the gospel, they are enemies as a people, in order to the bringing in of the Gentiles; but as touching the election of the people, they are beloved for the fathers' sake. We see evidently here, it is the election of the people, it is in contrast with blessing by the gospel, and the ground of their being beloved is the fathers, as we find constantly in the Old Testament, as Exodus 32:13; Leviticus 26:42; and other passages. For of His gifts and calling God does not repent.

The Spirit of God shews out, then, the wonderful moral wisdom of God in these counsels. The Gentiles had of old been unbelieving, so now it was pure mercy to them; the Jews had rejected this mercy to the Gentiles, and were themselves in unbelief, so that it had become pure

mercy now to them also. Thus God had concluded all in unbelief, that all might be mere objects of mercy. The Jews had promises, and if they had received Christ, faithfulness would have fulfilled them in Him. As is said in this epistle, “Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.” But the Jews rejected Christ, and so came under mercy like the Gentiles. This it is that makes the apostle cry out as to God’s deep wisdom, that this rejection of the Jews brought mercy to the Gentiles; and brought, seeing they rejected Christ in unbelief, the Jews on the footing of mere mercy also, though God only shewed Himself more abundantly true to His promise, which He accomplishes in spite of all. We have to read verse 31, “Even so have these also not believed your mercy, that they also might obtain mercy.”

This closes, and closes by a full exposition of God’s counsels as to His ways on earth, the doctrine of the epistle, and as the previous part had shewn how Jew or Gentile came alike upon a new footing. Justified by God, this shews His plans and counsels, according to which room was left, not only to admit Gentiles individually, but for the chain of promises to take a Gentile form, and withal a distinct system to be set up, the purposes of which being accomplished, the course of God’s dealings would flow back into the ancient channel of Jewish promise, and inheritance of blessing, but by grace. The church is not spoken of in teachings, but its existence assumed in practical exhortation in chapter 12. The rest of the epistle, save a verse or two of chapter 15, to which I have referred, is preceptual and hortatory, founded on the mercies revealed; mercy on which we entirely depend.

1 Verse 1 of chapter 6 treats of continuing in sin, because of grace; since one Man’s obedience saves me, I cannot, for I have my part in death. That is not living in it. Verse 15 supposes me free in the power of a new life. Am I to sin in this freedom, or give myself up to God? Which is the meaning and character of this new life I have through Christ?

2 Hence, in a certain sense, chapter 5 goes beyond chapter 8, as revealing what God is in Himself to a sinner, not what we are made before Him.

3 This refers to the cleansing of the Leper. In the consecration of priests: the oil and blood were sprinkled together on Aaron, his sons, and their garments, with him, after the blood was put on the ear, the hand, and the foot.

Exposition Of The Epistle To The Romans

Introduction.

It may facilitate our apprehension of the epistle to the Romans itself, if we take a brief survey of the other epistles of Paul which complete his teaching on the various parts of the same general whole—Galatians, Romans, Ephesians, Colossians. A part of 2 Corinthians furnishes us with the practical application of it. In the Galatians we have the first elements; in Ephesians the brightest results of the same great circle of truth. But some preliminary remarks may facilitate our perception of the different parts themselves contained in each epistle. The point I now refer to is the difference between the counsels of God and the responsibility of man. The counsels of God have their accomplishment in the second Man, who is from heaven. Every intelligent creature is responsible, and the saint in a far higher way than a mere child of Adam. But I now speak of our original responsibility as creatures of God, and consequently in connection with the first Adam.

It is a wondrous and blessed truth that God’s purpose and delight were in men. Before the world was the divine wisdom centred in them, and that in connection with the Son of His love. Purpose was before responsibility. Responsibility necessarily awaited the creation of the responsible creature; for we do not speak of angels here, who were a distinct creation altogether, present when this creation was set up by the power of God. That purpose of God had in view the last man, the

last Adam, the Son of His love, in whom His wisdom and His power were to be displayed; and it was not revealed till after He had accomplished His work, on which, connected with His person, God's glory in it was to be founded. This is very distinctly stated in two passages I will now quote. Titus 1:2, 3: "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began, but hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour." Again, 2 Timothy 1:9: "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works [that is responsibility, according to which judgment is], but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality [incorruptibility] to light by the gospel, whereunto I am appointed a preacher and an aposde and a teacher of the Gentiles."

The same in substance is stated in Ephesians 1:4, connected with other passages in the epistle, in which it is fully developed. In the well-known passage of Proverbs 8, though not of course as a dogmatic statement as in the epistles, we have the same truth of God's thoughts and purposes in man brought out in connection with wisdom personified, which, in its fulfilment, was in Christ. The object of that passage is not to celebrate— that which every pious mind surely owns—the wisdom of God in creation, as often supposed; but declares that wisdom was in God before creation, before His ways began. "Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old; I was set

up from everlasting." Or ever the earth was, wisdom was there, is the statement when no creation was. What was in the mind of Wisdom, of which the created earth was but the sphere? When Jehovah did create, and when He ordered our present world, Wisdom was present with Him "as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men." Man occupied Wisdom's thought: Wisdom's delight was there.

Hence when the Word became flesh, the angels, that prior creation, celebrate it, acclaiming this, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good pleasure in men "; not merely goodwill. It is the same word as when it is said, "in whom I am well pleased." Blessed unjealous praise of those holy beings delighting in God's thoughts, even if others were the object of them! For God's glory was their delight, and Christ eclipsed every other thought, they felt and thought according to their perfect nature. Purpose was thus in the second Man, the Son of God, the Word made flesh, the Son of God's love, and in those in whom His delight-was associated with Him, to which end He became man, and all, through His death, was to God's glory and righteousness.

But the purpose of God was not first in accomplishment. That came with the second Man, when the question of man's responsibility had had its full solution and result, and they were dealt with as lost. The responsibility of man as such, as a mere creature, was fully dealt with, or rather man as under it. First as innocent. There he failed, tested by the simple claim of obedience without an evil lust; but (God having been distrusted, and Satan listened to, in Adam's, or, however, Eve's soul) God was lost, and lust and transgression came in—characterised

now man and his ways, afraid of God, and driven out by Him. The sense of this responsibility was then lost, so to speak, in utter lawlessness, and the flood and judgment came upon the earth. Now, after God had established restraint, and authority in man on the earth in Noe, who also failed and got drunk, God developed His ways anew in positive dealings with man, as outside, to bless or to test. But, before testing, grace was revealed; man was dealt with in grace. A free unconditional promise was given to Abraham, the new root of hope and promise by grace.

It is not without interest to notice the distinction of God's ways before and after the flood. When Adam was judged, no promise was made to him. The first man had lost all but the judgment he had merited, nor could promise be made to sinful flesh. But the total destruction of Satan's power is announced. In judging the serpent, it is declared that the woman's Seed, not Adam (clearly he was not woman's seed), should bruise the serpent's head. The promises were in Christ. Then, though individuals were dealt with in grace, as Abel, Enoch, Noah, there was no new system or principle set up. Man remained responsible as man; and the earth was lawless, corrupt, and full of violence, and so bad that judgment came, and the world that then was perished. There was no new head and root of promise. After the flood, man rose up in rebellion to make himself a name, not to be scattered; and God confounded his language, and nations were formed, and Satan introduced idolatry. Save as an abstract root of all worship, as the consciousness of God must be, God was set aside, and men put demons in His place, and clothed deified lusts with His name.4 Then God called out from

the world which He had made, and all relationship with it, one to whom He revealed Himself, and whom He made the head of a family belonging to Him, whether naturally or spiritually. To this chosen and called one, this new head of a race, God gave promises directly addressed, not indeed to man as such, but to the chosen and called one. The promise was introduced,5 and first deposited in Abraham the father of the faithful; it was soon after, by a figure intimating the death and resurrection of Christ, confirmed to the Seed. It was more than the judgment by which the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head; there was direct personal blessing from God to the objects of it, and this blessing in the seed of Abraham. The promise and the seed were fully united in the revelations of God.

After this came another very important dealing of God with the fleshly seed of Abraham—the giving of the law, the raising the question of righteousness, and requiring it from man, according to the perfect rule of it as applicable to Adam's children: blessing and life dependent on obedience—an obedience as justly required as the rule of it was perfect. Here responsibility was distinctly brought into relief, sanctioned by God's express authority, and a perfect measure of it given. We know the result. The golden calf was made before the tables of the law could be brought into the camp. To natural responsibility revealed authority and a revealed rule were added; righteousness was defined and claimed from man according to his obligations, measured by God Himself. Transgression came in, as before in Adam.

But then man's responsibility, to say nothing of God's patient dealings with him by the prophets, was dealt

with in another and wholly new way. God came into this sinful world in grace, beseeching men to be reconciled to Him; and the promised Seed of David came to the seed of Abraham, according to the flesh. But when He came, there was no man; when He called, there was none to answer. Not only sin was developed in lawlessness, and the law met by transgression, but mercy had been rejected, and the promise itself, and the promised One, despised. The trial of responsibility was over; the tree was bad; and all the digging about it and dunging brought no true fruit to God. The fig-tree on the way bore leaves only, and was judged for ever. The one beloved Son, if He sought fruit, was cast out and slain. If the King invited guests, His invitation was despised. Not only God had driven man out of paradise, but man, as far as he was concerned, had turned God—come in grace into the ruined world of outcasts—out of it in hatred against Him. Sin was complete, and man lost. But now, speaking reverently, it was God's turn. They with wicked hands had slain Christ, but it was according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. The truth was, He had appeared once in the end of the world (the consummation of ages—an expression we can now easily understand) to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Here the Lord, according to every need of man and the divine glory, met the consequences of man's responsibility— made sin, and bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. Propitiation was perfect, redemption (not yet as regards exercised power, but moral title in righteousness in the value of Christ's work) accomplished; and here, not only had man's responsibility been met, but God perfectly glorified in all

that He is: love, righteous judgment against sin, majesty, truth, and devoted obedience to Himself at all cost,6 and man entered in righteousness into the glory of God, and as Son established heir of all things. See John 13:31, 32; 17:1, 4, 5. Thus in the cross of Christ the full foundation was laid in righteousness, according to the righteousness of God, for the accomplishment of the divine counsels in glorifying the redeemed in the second Man, the last Adam, the Lord from heaven. The putting away the sins of those that had part with Him was accomplished (those that rejected Him were doubly guilty); the revelation of the righteousness of God had now its full ground, Christ being at the right hand of God as man in virtue of it, and the counsels of God could be fully brought out to the glory of God by us, yea, all His plans for the glory of the last Adam, His beloved Son, and of us with Him.

Thus we have these two great subjects before us, the responsibility of man and the counsels of God. I should add, to complete these truths, that Christ thus risen becomes our life; and the Holy Ghost is given to us that we may enjoy the efficacy of Christ's first coming, in forgiveness and righteousness, and have God's love shed abroad in our hearts, and have the earnest of the inheritance which is before us in glory; consciously sons of God, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

However, the forgiveness of sins and the clearing away of all that belonged to the old Adam on the one hand, and the counsels of God on the other, are now through the cross distinctly revealed and the difference as clearly seen. On one hand the evil and our responsibility are met by the work of the cross; on the other the righteous ground of the accomplishment of all God's

counsels is laid, so that they can be revealed. We have seen responsible man in his natural state, unfallen and fallen, and that end in the flood; then in the renewed earth, as to this point, when man sought to make it his own, and God had.divided it into nations, and these had fallen into idolatry. God called out one to be a race and people for Himself, and gave him the promises, confirming them to his seed; then man, this called people, put under law; and finally the heir of promise come, and God in Christ reconciling the world. Man had thus been fully tried in his natural state, and by all that God could do in dealing with him. The result was either lawless sin or enmity against God. God Himself, now in His own work of grace, wrought redemption, and, perfectly glorified in Christ a man amongst men, set Him as man in righteousness in the divine glory, our forerunner to whom we are to be conformed. Thus forgiveness, righteousness, the setting aside the old thing, were secured, and the counsels of God brought fully out as to having man with Himself in glory, in and with His Son the Lord Christ, the Spirit being given to the forgiven ones, that they might know this redemption fully, stand consciously in the place of sons, and have an earnest of the glory.

Of this the epistle to the Galatians brings out very distinctly the following points:—promise, in contrast with law, which brought a curse and no justification of man; redemption from that curse, by Christ’s being made a curse for us; then through Christ the promised Seed, come of the woman (once the source of sin), and made under the law to redeem those under it, meeting the two great forms of responsibility and consequent judgment before and after the flood, Himself the Son,

that, the blessing of Abraham coming on the Gentiles too, all might receive the adoption of sons. Thus was Christ the fulfiller of promise in contrast with the schoolmaster till He came. But, we being sons by faith in Him, the Spirit is given to us, giving the consciousness of the relationship. The heirs are no more servants but sons, and the Spirit is in contrast with the law. The flesh, our evil nature, lusts against the Spirit; but, if led of this, we are not under law; nor can there be a law against the fruit of the Spirit. Thus we have the recognition of the natural evil of man (not the full inquiry as to our place under God's dealings), promise, law, the promised One, redemption accomplished by Him, and the consequent gift of the promised Spirit and the sonship into which we are brought. The ways and dealings of God are fully discussed, our place ascertained; but the counsels of God are not touched upon. Hence I said it was elementary, though most important in its place.

The epistle to the Romans discusses fully the ground on which a man can be put with God in this world; and how the promise to the Jews, and their present rejection, and the no-difference doctrine as to Jew and Gentile, is reconciled with the promise. Our study of the epistle will bring this out, with the Lord's help, in its place. I only remark that it also treats the responsibility of man and his state, not the counsels of God. But there are such, and our security under them into glory is just touched upon in chapter 8, so that a link with the other point is given.7 I would now refer to two aspects of man's state of sin, necessary to understand the distinction between the foregoing epistles and the others previously mentioned. Man may be considered as living in evil ways, alive to sin and lust, so to speak, but, if so, dead

towards God. As to the former, death must come in to free him from the evil; in the latter aspect, he is viewed as dead in sins. The epistle to the Romans treats fully the former, and the remedy by grace; that to the Ephesians treats man as dead in sins. In Romans it is justifying and delivering sinful man, and bringing him out of that condition by redemption; in Ephesians it is a new creation. Here consequently, while redemption is fully stated, the counsels of God are fully unfolded, and man is seen sitting in heavenly places in Christ. In Colossians we have both aspects—buried unto death, and, when dead in sins, raised with Christ. The believer is seen risen with Christ, having died with Him; but heaven is in hope and prospect: he is not seen sitting there.

The Ephesians therefore begins with the counsels of God, first setting us in our place before God morally like Himself— Christ's position, who is gone to His Father and our Father, His God and our God; then, after briefly stating redemption as that which we have as needed to bring us there, and indeed to make God known, God's purposes as to the Christ Himself, head over all as Man, are stated; which brings in the inheritance and the earnest of the given Spirit till the redemption of the purchased possession, when glory will be revealed. The present exaltation of Christ, and the working of the same power in us which took Him when dead from the grave to the right hand of God, brings us raised with Him to be in Him on nigh, the church associated with Him; His body who is Head over all things, and to it. This work of Christ is unfolded in chapter 2. Christ is first seen in death where we were lying in sins, and (these put away by His bearing them—going down to

death for us) God's power comes in and raises us up with Him into the same place of glory and blessing. Thus the purpose of God in the sons and heirs, in the church as Christ's body united to Him, is fully revealed; the practical consequence gone into. It is a scheme hidden from all ages and generations, impossible to exist or be revealed till the middle wall of partition was broken down.8 Then the gifts of the Spirit from the Man on high to build up the saints and evangelise the world, forming the body in union with Christ, are unfolded; and, from chapter 4:17, practical conduct. It is interesting to see that as we are perfectly brought to God in Christ the conduct of the Christian is that of our coming out as a child from Him to display God's own character, of which Christ is the perfect pattern in man. This subjectively depends on having put off the old man and put on the new, which is created after God, etc., and the presence of the Holy Ghost, who is not to be grieved. God, as love and light, is the objective measure to be followed, as by dear children, Christ Himself having been the perfect expression of both. It is well to note here that the contrast with, and the superiority to, law is striking. This takes love to self as the measure of love to others; that, the perfect giving up of self in love as Christ did. Then we have Christ's love to, and care for, the church as such; and finally we are God's warriors in Canaan—that is, in heavenly places—and have need of God's whole armour against spiritual wickedness, walking in dependence on God. Such is a brief sketch of the principles of the epistle to the Ephesians.

In the Colossians saints are not sitting in heavenly places; a hope is laid up for them in heaven. It goes farther than Romans, in that we are risen with Christ, a

point not treated of in Romans;9 but it does not, as the epistle to the Ephesians, seat us in heavenly places in Him. We are to set our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth. But the Romans and Ephesians view of the case are in their elements distinctly stated. We are buried with Him by baptism unto death. This is as Romans 6. The believer is looked at as previously alive in his sins, as stated indeed in chapter 3:7. But then he is looked at as quickened together with Christ (chap. 2:13), which is not in the Romans, but is in the Ephesian development of the truth;10 but it does not reach on to the full Ephesian doctrine, that we are sitting in heavenly places in Christ. So, further on, we find, “If ye be dead with Christ” (chap. 2:20); and “If ye be risen with Christ,” chap. 3:1. Then it is exhortation: we are to seek those things that are above where Christ sits. There is another truth connected with this which shews the perfection of scripture and God’s elaborate care in teaching His saints fully.

In Colossians, save one practical expression which forms no part of its doctrine, the Spirit is not mentioned. It is having put off the old man and put on the new—life as risen with Christ. Ephesians is the full development of sonship and the body. It is by the Holy Ghost we have the Spirit of adoption, and are baptised into one body. Hence His presence is fully noticed in that epistle. The body is assumed practically in Colossians as chapter 3:15, but the Head, Christ, is more its subject. The fulness of the Godhead is in Christ in Colossians. In Ephesians the body is His fulness, completing the head, who fills all in all. In 2 Corinthians 4:10 and following verses will be found the practical power of the doctrine of Romans in daily operation. Death as to all that was of

Adam in Paul is effectuated in every-day life, that nothing but the life of Jesus should be manifested in his dealings with others; God also helping to the same end, by making him pass through circumstances which were death to all natural life. Compare 2 Cor. 1:8, 9. In verse 14 we have others viewed in the light of Ephesian doctrine—all men dead, or Christ need not have died for them.11 The glory of an exalted Christ is what is especially before his eyes here—the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

I trust this survey, though rapid, may enable us to study with more intelligence the epistle to the Romans, which does not enter on the counsels of God with any development, but lays the ground fully for their accomplishment in putting away sins and giving deliverance from the old man. The responsibility of man is fully treated, God’s righteousness explained and established, and grace unfolded as the source and principle of God’s dealings with us. The special case of promises to the Jews, which seemed to clash with bringing all with no difference into the same standing before God, is treated in a special appendix.

It may facilitate our inquiries to give the division of the epistle into the parts of which it is naturally composed. The first seventeen verses are introductory, the last giving the thesis of the whole epistle. From verse 18 to the end of chapter 5:11 is one great division, where sins are treated of, and God’s grace in respect of these sins. In this as a whole, chapter 1:18 to chapter 3:20 gives the full proof that all were under sin; and then the apostle returns to verse 17, and declares how the righteousness of God is now revealed, propitiation having been made through Christ’s blood. Chapter 4

speaks of Christ's resurrection as sealing His work to the same purpose. But thus far imputing righteousness is not carried farther than forgiveness of sins. The first eleven verses of chapter 5 give the blessed result and effect of grace in our present standing under that grace.

Chapter 5:12 begins a new subject—the old man, the flesh, sin in the flesh, what we are as of Adam (not what we have done, though these are the fruits and the proof of the other). Here our death with Christ comes in, and life in Him (not in Adam). It is deliverance, not forgiveness. This second blessing and our place in Christ and security through Him are stated in chapter 8. This gives occasion to bring the question of the law fully before us. It addresses itself to the child of Adam, but as such we have died in Christ, and thus it has lost its application to such.

Thus all have sinned, Jew and Gentile, and had the same fleshly nature. There was no difference; and if it was God's righteousness, it was as applicable to one as to the other. But then a difficulty arose. There were promises to Israel as well as law. What about them? Did not they on God's part make a difference? This is met in what I have called an appendix—chapters 9-11. From chapter 12 and on, we have exhortation founded on mercies previously treated of. The epistle to the Romans furnishes the eternal principles of God's relationship with man; the way in which, by means of Christ dead and risen, the believer is established in blessing; and the reconciling of these things with the speciality of the promises made to the Jews by Him whose gifts and calling are without repentance.

Chapter 1.

I may now turn to the details; and first to the introductory verses, chapter 1:1-17- We must remember that the apostle had never been at Rome, and writes upon the ground of his universal mission to the Gentiles. Hence, while the personal salutations are very numerous, the epistle is very much of a treatise on the subject he refers to; what we may call the gospel fully reasoned out, the state of man, the place the law really held, and, as we have seen, the position the Jews, who had been nigh, had got into. He begins with his mission. He was separated to the gospel of God. He was an apostle by the calling of God.

Firstly, the Lord had personally called him, and given him his mission to the Gentiles; separating him out of the whole human race, Jew and Gentile, and connecting him with Himself in glory; Acts 26:17. “Delivering thee [taking thee away], from the people [the Jews], and from the Gentiles, to whom now I send thee.” The Lord had appeared to him for the purpose of his being a witness of the glorified Lord Jesus. Hence we find him speaking of the gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Cor. 4), and God who caused the light to shine out of darkness shining in his heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Hence, too, he says that if he had known Christ after the flesh—that is, in His earthly associations—as Messiah down here, as a Jew would expect Him, according to the word, he knew Him thus no more. The Man glorified, after having suffered death and accomplished redemption, was the Christ he knew. It was the beginning and head of the new creation—the glorified Man—the Lord who saved His people as being Himself. Still the administration of

the mercy recognised the place God had given to the Jews. There was no difference; but it was to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Secondly, he was separated, actually, and sent forth to active service at Antioch by the Holy Spirit. “Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.” His mission he received directly from the Lord, revealed in glory. He was separated to the glory, to the Lord in it. His immediate separation to his actual work was by the Holy Ghost. He was separated to the glad tidings of God. This has a double character. It was concerning God’s Son; but it was the accomplishment of promise on the one side; on the other, the Person of the Son of God designated in power through resurrection, the setting aside the effect of sin, not God’s judgment of course, but that wherein the power of Satan reigned over man by sin. It is to be remarked here that the Person of the Son of God is that which is especially put forward here as the gospel to which he was separated. We shall find propitiation and righteousness fully stated, but first of all God’s gospel is concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord— first, Seed of David according to the flesh; then Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection of the dead. That power, divine power, which raised Him12 from the dead and proved Him Son of God, was manifested all through His life in the holiness which never allowed sin to enter for an instant. He was quickened by the Spirit (lit. in Spirit), but His holiness, separation to God, was by the Spirit also. Resurrection was the public demonstration that He was the Son of God with power, victory over the full wages of sin as seen in this world; but the opened eye would have seen the same power in the exclusion of

sin itself in absolute and perfect holiness all His life through.

Thus accomplishment of promise and divine power over death were there, and the Son of God as Man in absolute holiness—our Lord Jesus Christ. They were God's glad tidings concerning His Son. Of His work, save in triumph over death, we have as yet nothing; but God has come in power and grace, where sin and death reigned. Holiness has been manifested in man in this world, and death, under which man lay, has been overcome. It is important to notice that, in the statement of the glad tidings of God, the Person of the Son is first of all brought out: His intervention, in power to deliver,13 promise accomplished, but, above all, it is the Son of God. Grace has made Him a man, and resurrection has proved Him Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness. There is One revealed to us in perfect grace, but who in grace has a perfect claim over our souls.

Another thing we may remark in this, as will be further seen, is that it is what He is from God. God has accomplished His promise; God has brought in victory over death. It is all in the Person of the Son, a man; not what man is for God at all, save the Person of Christ Himself. We shall soon see that, as God's Son is revealed in man triumphant over death, God's righteousness is revealed too; then fully the need of man, and how it is met—fully met; but first, what God has Himself brought in and for Himself, for grace and glory, what has more the character of the everlasting gospel as to the power that is in it—the Person of the Son in the Man Jesus, and divine righteousness. This is the general aspect; man's responsibility and man's need will come after. But we

must first have the thing as it is for God and before God, though all in grace to us.

But there is another point I must notice here, as it refers to the whole character of the epistle, which is more that of laying the foundation than of building the superstructure:14 the testimony that Christ is Son of God is resurrection, not glory. The ascension, though assumed, of course, as is the church, is not mentioned, save in chapter 8:34, to bring in intercession. Ascension brought in the result in the counsels of God; but already in resurrection God had put His seal on Christ's Person and work. Redemption was accomplished; sin atoned for; death overcome; he who had the power of death brought to nothing in the stronghold of his power—all accomplished which made glory to be righteousness. Thus the whole case between man and God was met and established upon a new ground. The glories which result according to the counsels of God are not gone into. We shall see that our resurrection even with Christ is not spoken of; our death with Him is, because this was necessary to close the old evil, and bring us into a state capable of living with God as fully delivered. Christ's resurrection and our death with Him are necessary to make good our title, and close the old and evil state, and introduce what is essentially new. Our place in that remained yet to be entered into according to the counsels of God.15 The mission of the apostle was for obedience to the faith, the subjection of men's souls to the revelation of God's Son, the risen Man, the Lord Jesus—to the truth of God revealed in Him, and the grace which accompanied the truth; for both must be there that we may believe. Nor, indeed, can one be fully revealed without the others, for grace is part of truth

where God is fully revealed; nor could grace come without the truth, for what would the grace be about, and how should God be revealed? But God is light, and God is love; and these, coming to us, are grace and truth. This obedience of faith was “amongst all nations,” not of all nations. The grace and truth must go to men as such. God thus revealed could not be only to Jews: but the time was not come to subject all nations by power, but to call a people out of them— “to take out of them a people for his name.” Among these the believers at Rome were the called of Jesus Christ. To such the apostle addressed himself at Rome. They were already there. God did not allow Christianity to be founded by an apostle at Rome. These believers were the beloved of God, and saints by His calling.

The apostle then enters into his own feelings as to, and interest in, them; and that connected with his universal commission to the Gentiles, in which the love of Christ wrought to make those the objects of his heart, and precious to him, whom he had not even seen. The apostolic spiritual power he would impart to them, but in unfeigned grace he would be comforted in their mutual faith. “Debtor to Greeks and barbarians” (for such is the place of love in power), he was ready to preach the glad tidings to those at Rome also. He was not ashamed of the glad tidings; they were “the power of God unto salvation”; simple words, but how much they contain! It is not God claiming from man; it is not man acting for God, or making out the means of meeting Him. But, God acting for man, it is power at work in man’s favour; and this, not to help or plead merely, but to deliver from the state he was in—to save him.

Next, the way. It is such to every one that believed, Jew, or Greek; they wanted saving. God's power, there to save, took man up in his need and sin, not in his titles or claims, even if given of God, and applied to a lost Gentile as to a lost Jew. It was for "every one that believed"—the way of it was faith; the order of it recognised God's ways. It was "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." But this did not alter its character; it was salvation to a sinful Jew, who had to come in in mercy, just like a Gentile, by faith in what was on God's part in grace towards him, though in the order of administration it might first be addressed to him.

Further, it is the power of God to salvation, because in it the righteousness of God is revealed on the principle of faith to faith. Nothing had to be done by man; nothing was required from man. God's righteousness, perfect and absolute —that on which He would bless without limit—was revealed for man. More He could not require; more, as to righteousness, He could vnot give; and there it was for man, and revealed, and thus God's power to save him. This took it clean out of man's doings for God; which I insist on, because it is the great principle of truth, it is God's doing for man. It is on the principle of faith that it might be by grace; man only believed through grace what was revealed. Hence the believer withal possessed it, and so Gentile or Jew. But here the object is its intrinsic nature. It was "God's righteousness"; it was revealed "on the principle of faith" (works do not make out God's righteousness, but man's), and hence "for faith." The just were to live by faith.

This closes the introductory verses. The Person of the Lord Jesus and the righteousness of God are the great

thesis of the glad tidings, of God. One revealed as the Deliverer, the Son of God, claimed the obedience of faith; the other, still on the principle of faith, revealed as the ground on which man could have a part in purposed blessing through grace. The apostle now turns to what made this righteousness of God necessary to us. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness.” This is a most important principle. It is not governmental wrath, such as bringing the Assyrian against Israel, or leading them captive to Babylon—a thing of this world, while God was hidden still behind the veil. It tells us of the incompatibility of God’s nature with evil. God’s wrath was revealed against everything inconsistent with His nature—wrath from heaven against all ungodliness; and, where the truth was known, and men might seem to be nearer to God, as the Jews, if held in unrighteousness, wrath was against such as so held it too. Wrath against all ungodliness was revealed from heaven; Gentile, Jew, men in every condition, came under the judgment. It was not a hidden God dealing in earthly judgment, but God Himself fully revealed according to His own nature, abhorrent of evil, in necessary wrath against all evil, wherever it was met. His nature could admit no evil. Dispensational ways there might have been—government, patience. But now wrath was revealed from heaven against all evil, wherever it was found.

The apostle then shews on what ground the judgment went, as against all men: on the heathen, to the end of the chapter; on moralisers, in the beginning of chapter 2; and from verse 17 of chapter 2 on the Jew, which goes on to chapter 3:20. The ground of the condemnation of

the heathen is creation testimony, and their not retaining God in their knowledge; for in Noah that knowledge was. The first ground is stated in verses 19, 20; the second in verse 21. They turned the glory of the incorruptible God into images of men, birds, beasts, and reptiles; and as they thus turned God's glory into dishonour, God gave them up to turn man's too, and they degraded themselves in vileness as they had degraded God in idolatry. Yet they knew the judgment of God.

And this made the moralisers, the Socrates, and the like, inexcusable; they did the things they judged; see chapter 2. But God's judgment is according to truth against those who commit such things. Doing them and judging others was not the way of escaping God's judgment; or, were they despising God's mercy leading them to repentance, and heaping up wrath for the day of judgment—of the revelation of God's righteous judgment? God always judges evil morally; but there is a day when that judgment will be revealed, and this dealing with evil take place in a manifest way, according to the nature of God. Judgment will be executed. We have seen this infinitely important principle in chapter 1:17; not dispensational government on those near or those far off, but God revealing His judgment of evil in man according to what He is. Hence the light of Christianity is thrown here on the grounds of judgment, though the light actually possessed is made to enter into the measure of retribution; but the nature, and, in judgment, the authority of God, rejects evil. Jew or Gentile, it is all alike. When He is revealed, evil is dealt with as evil. The special advantages of one may enter into the ground of judgment, and if they have sinned under law, they will be judged by law. But evil is evil,

while God is God, be the evil in a Jew or a Gentile; nor is there respect of persons with Him.

But the revelation of God, which thus brings in the knowledge of judgment according to truth, necessarily supposes the truth there, and obedience to the truth became part of the moral testing of man, as well as law and natural conscience. Hence, in chapter 2:7, 8, we have what Christianity has brought to light; verses 9, 10, tribulation and anguish are upon every soul of man that does evil, and glory, honour, and peace upon every soul of man that does good—to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

The object of the apostle here is evidently not to shew how a sinner could be justified; but that, though God might follow in His administration of blessing what He had accorded to the Jewish people, yet now that He had revealed Himself, He had to do with realities, and that a godly Gentile was more His delight than an ungodly Jew, whatever the privileges of the latter. The doer of the law would be justified, be he Jew or Gentile; not he who had and broke it. There was no respect of persons with God, and conscience might take notice of right and wrong where there was no law, and thus become a law to a man who had no law as given of God. So they that had sinned without law would perish without it. Here the discussion is not, by what power or grace a man would be led or enabled to walk conscientiously, but that reality of walk, and not privilege of position, was what God owned.

It is well to remark that there is no law written in the heart16 of the Gentile—that is the new covenant—but the work which the law requires the conscience

recognises as right or wrong. Conscience knows it is wrong to murder or steal, when no law is given. Man got the knowledge of good and evil by the fall, and it is of all importance to recognise the difference of this and law. Law imposes a rule by authority—here God's authority; conscience on the contrary takes notice of right and wrong in itself, as God does. "The man is become as one of us, knowing good and evil." That is, conscience takes notice of good and evil in itself, as good and as evil, without any law which prescribes or forbids it; and so far a man is a law to himself, that is, not having the thing prescribed to him, or forbidden, as a law does.

It is well also to remark here that verses 13-15 are a parenthesis. The connection is, "judged by the law in the day." Remark here, also, on the side of man's liability as before of God's actings, it is not governmental judgment, the ways of God with men on earth, visiting, it is true, sins on a people or on a race with longsuffering and patience; but the secrets of men's hearts judged—all brought to light, strictly and rightly judged—according to the necessary requirements of God's nature, taking into account the advantages men have had; not governing in patience, but judging in righteousness, according to what is good and what is evil, as none can deny, and where none can escape. The secrets of men's hearts would be judged, and men come out such as they really were, however hidden from the eyes of men.

In chapter 2:17 the apostle begins definitely with a Jew, insisting on the same truth, but the converse of what he had said of the Gentile. A Jew who boasted of the law and broke it was as bad as he who had none; the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles through them. He only was a Jew who was so inwardly; whose

heart was circumcised in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise was not of men, but of God.

We come now to a very important principle in the ways of God, the possession of privileges where there was no renewal of heart to profit by them, and whether this made such any better, more agreeable to God—for this the Jew pretended; chapter 3. The apostle's argument seemed to level all. It did morally before God, save as privileges added to responsibility;. but he fully admitted the existence of very great privileges and advantages where God had placed them. If the circumcised were uncircumcision really unless they kept the law, what advantage had the Jew? Much every way. The apostle fully recognises their privileges, especially in having the scriptures, "the oracles of God"; and if some did not believe, their unbelief would not make the faith—that is, the faithfulness of God—of no effect. God would be true if every man were a liar. He would fulfil His word. But if His accomplishing it in spite of man's unfaithfulness only the more proved His faithfulness, so that He was the more glorified through man's unfaithfulness, this did not hinder His judging the evil: were it so, He could not judge the world at all. If man's unrighteousness made God's righteousness more conspicuous, why should God judge him for it? This is a general principle, but it has a special application to the Jews; for the more the heathen opposed and were jealous of them, and trampled them down, so much the more God's faithfulness shone out, and He could no more judge the Gentiles, the world, than the Jews. But it is a general principle that man's unrighteousness commending or proving God's righteousness did not make it unjust to judge.

The apostle returns to the form in which it applies to the Jews—that their falseness made God's faithfulness to His promises more glorious, so that he had not to find fault; nay, they might do evil that good might come, returning in this latter to the general principle; as, indeed, some charged the Christian with holding. As to such principle, the apostle does not condescend to reason, but simply says, "whose damnation is just." No, all our evil does commend this patient faithfulness of God to His promises, and to His goodness. Man would soon reject those who dealt with him as he does with God. But that does not hinder responsibility, and sin, and judgment.

Well, then, the Jews had advantages; were they, then, better than the Gentiles? In no way. The apostle had already proved both under sin. He then quotes, first from the Psalms, then from Isaiah, the plain testimony of scripture, denouncing, as wholly sinners, all they were addressed to. The Jew boasted these scriptures were for him, and for him alone. Well, says the apostle, we know that what the law says, it does say to those who are under it. Let us then hear its voice to such. This is what it says: "There is none righteous, no, not one." The Gentiles confessedly were sunk in all manner of vice, in corruption, and idolatry. The Jews were the privileged race, and the special privilege was that the oracles of God were committed to them. Well, the apostle owned that the law spoke to those under it—but it declared there was none righteous. The Jew was condemned by his own plea.

And now see what is the state of man, under the greatest advantages, possessing what God has to give, as the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son! None righteous; none that understandeth, no

intelligence at all spiritually; none that seeketh after God, in will all wrong; none that doeth good, no, not one; evil, without exception, when tried. The full forms of evil in which this state develops itself are then gone into: amiable characters which some may have, as animals may; but a heart seeking God, or fearing God, not one. Every mouth was stopped, and all the world guilty before God: the Gentiles confessedly so—lawless and reprobate in mind, working uncleanliness with greediness; the Jew condemned out of his own mouth by that of which he boasted. So far from any being justified by the deeds of the law, law brought with it the knowledge of sin. Sin was everywhere— law the special conviction of it. This closes the apostle's proof of that state which gave occasion to the wrath of God being revealed from heaven, the proof reaching as a whole from chapter 1:19 to the end of chapter 3:20.

Then the apostle returns to his proper subject, stated in chapter 1:17—the righteousness of God. Man clearly had none. He was proved, Jew and Gentile, all under sin; but now God's righteousness, entirely apart from law, was manifested. The law and the prophets bore testimony to it. This is the great leading point; God's righteousness is manifested. This is by the faith of Jesus Christ; such is the manner of its being set forth and received. It is towards all. Were it man's, it must be by the law, which is the perfect measure of that, and, consequently, only for the Jews, who alone had that law. But it is God's, and by faith, and so for all, and actually (since it was by faith of Jesus Christ) upon all those that believed. For there is no difference; all are alike, all under sin; but God's righteousness was by faith on every one who believed.

The justification is free by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

This gives the thesis of the doctrine of righteousness, as a whole, complete in itself. In chapter 1:17, God's righteousness, we are told, is revealed in the gospel. Now, in contrast with law, which was the way of man's righteousness; without law; chap. 3:21, that is, having nothing to say to it (wholly apart from the law), we know the manner of this righteousness in its application—it is by faith of Jesus Christ to all, applicable and held out on the principle of faith to all, and upon all those that believe. All were alike under sin, proved so, the justification of all alike freely by God's grace, through redemption— that redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

We have then additional detail, and the manner of its application to the Old Testament saints and those since Christ. God, the apostle tells us, had set Christ forth as a propitiatory, a place of access on the ground of redemption and blood presented to God as the atonement or propitiation for sins. Now, as regards the Old Testament saints, this now proved God's righteousness in having borne with them, where they sinned. His forbearance had been shewn at the time; but where was the righteousness in thus passing over the sins of the Abrahams, and Samuels, and Davids, and the like? This was now shewn. It was in view of the propitiation to be wrought by Christ, ever present to God, on the ground of which He dealt as if it was already accomplished, so far as the forgiveness of sins went.

Then, as regards those subsequent to the work, God's full present justice was declared—His righteousness declared at this time; that through which He could be

just and justify, yea, that in which He was manifested just, besides exalting Christ, is in justifying the believers in Christ Jesus. This was an immense truth. Forbearance had been before, righteousness in exercising it unrevealed. Now righteousness was revealed, God's righteousness, first in His exercise of that forbearance, justifying His remission of the sins committed before Christ, but further (righteousness, God's righteousness, being fully revealed), the ground of justifying those who believed in Jesus, God's righteousness in doing so was as clearly manifested as the ground on which it went was perfectly accomplished. God's righteousness was fully proved in setting Christ at His right hand, as we learn in John 16:10. He is gone up on high in virtue of having glorified God perfectly on the cross, and God's righteousness therein revealed and declared. In the part of Romans we are now occupied with, we have only the fact that God's righteousness is now declared as to remission of past sins, and justifying believers now, Christ being set forth as a mercy-seat through faith in His blood. The value of Christ's blood brings the witness of righteousness in remission of past sins, but it brings a known present justification of those who believe, maintaining fully the justice of God. He is just and the Justifier, not a condemner, of those that believe.

All boasting then on man's part is shut out, for it is God's work and God's grace by which man is justified (clearly not by a law of works, there would then be man's boasting), but by the law of faith which simply receives, through grace, the effect of another's work. We may see here that law is used for a regularly acting principle—the law of faith, the law of works. We shall find this again. Hence, as we cannot mingle the two

principles of gaining a thing by working and receiving a thing by faith (and, indeed, another thing—God's righteousness, not man's), one of them excludes the other, and we conclude, not only that a man is justified by faith through Christ's blood by grace, but that it is without—wholly apart from, to the exclusion of—works of law. God is justifying sinners by His dealings for them, not man righteous by a law which he has kept. For all are under sin.

And is God only the God of a people, even of His people? Is He not God of all nations? Surely He is, and indeed now in grace, just as He is for the Jew, who needed it as much as the Gentile. For it is one and the same God who justifies the circumcision (who sought their own righteousness by law) on the principle of faith, freely by grace, and, if a Gentile had that faith, justified that Gentile by the faith that he had. This is the force of the words translated "by" and "through." "By" is on the principle of; "through" by means of, when one possessed it. The Jew sought righteousness on a wrong principle. The gospel revealed the true one—faith. If the Gentile had the faith, he had the justification which was given on that principle.

If then this justification was by faith to the exclusion of law, did it set aside the law? In no way. The law brought the conviction of sin, nay, brought the curse, from which he who was under it had to be delivered; and the justification of such an one, the deliverance of such an one from the curse by such a means as Christ's bearing it, gave the highest possible sanction to the law. That Christ should bear its curse established the authority of law as nothing else did. The apostle had just used it to bring the Jew fully under conviction, so that the blood of

Christ, and grace, and redemption were needed; and the introduction of them as needed by the Jew, who was under the law, if it set aside all righteousness by law, recognised fully the authority of the law as bringing them under the transgression from which they had to be justified. The paying a debt recognises the debt, and the obligation which made it such, though (and in that in which) it puts an end to it. There is more than this in the law, it is true. I only use the image to shew that putting an end to anything may fully prove the obligation of it.

Righteousness by faith was on a principle incompatible with law. In one, God's work in grace justified freely; according to the other, man's work in righteousness made peace, redemption, and God's work unnecessary. Nor did obedience under law produce what grace did after all. It was not, if accomplished, God's righteousness, but man's. But redemption, and grace, and Christ's blood, effectual through faith, recognised the authority of law, and gave its sanction to it, by meeting in another way the sins and condemnation incurred under it. It went on a different principle, wholly incompatible with law as a way of righteousness; but it recognised the claim of righteousness made by the law as made by God, and, when man had failed, met that claim in grace. The two could not work together, for they contradicted each other in every point: one rested on grace, the other on work; one on God's work, the other on man's. One consequently gave man's righteousness if fulfilled, which it was not; the other, God's by a perfected work. But the grace that was incompatible with law owned and met the claim of law, in order to justify freely him who had failed under it.

But there was more in Israel's history than law. There were the Abrahams and Davids, promises, and divine faithfulness that owned the promises. What ground did they stand upon? What has Abraham found? Was he justified by works? If so, he has whereof to glory. But it is not so before God (proof before men, to make it good in testimony to them, there may have been and was), but before God he was counted righteous through faith. Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. If a man works, reward is of debt, not grace; but to him that works not, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. This is established by the case of David. "Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed the man to whom the Lord imputeth no sin." Note here that thus far the imputation of righteousness goes no farther than the forgiveness of sins. There is more farther on; but here that is all. A man is justified from what he is guilty of, from his sins, and so far accounted righteous. For such is the force of imputing righteousness. His faith is reckoned to him for righteousness. It is not put to him to account.17 Abraham believed God, and was reckoned righteous because of his faith. It was not that his faith had so much intrinsic value, which was put to his account, as so much righteousness; but he was esteemed or reckoned righteous for his faith. God held him as a righteous man because of his faith. So David speaks of one accounted righteous without any works. No sin was imputed to him. He was accounted, held to be wholly clear of it before God, when it was forgiven and covered. The responsibility of man was fully met, and he looked on as clear from sin.

Was this only for the circumcision? Our thesis is that faith was counted for righteousness to Abraham. When? When he was circumcised or uncircumcised? Uncircumcised. There is thus, in no less an example than Abraham, an uncircumcised person justified by faith. Circumcision was only a seal of the righteousness which he had when uncircumcised; and thus he was the father of all that believe (even if not circumcised, as believing Gentiles), that they might be accounted righteous also through faith; and, further, the father of true separation to God (as I understand it, though the form of the sentence be somewhat strange), not only for circumcised Israel, but for whoever walked in the faith of Abraham— circumcision, not in the letter but in the spirit.

The apostle then develops the principles of the case of Abraham. The promise to Abraham to be the heir of the world was not through law, but through the righteousness of faith. If they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void. To make Israel as under the law exclusively heir destroyed the principle on which Abraham had the inheritance. He had it by faith, and not by any law at all. Promise is not law; and to found the inheritance on law, and give it to Israel because of the law, made the promise of none effect. Promise, and faith in it, went together. Law was man’s work, and on God’s part requirement from man, not promise to him. And indeed the law works wrath instead of giving an inheritance; for where no law is, there is no transgression, for there is nothing to transgress: working wrath and bringing in transgression is surely not promise. But the inheritance is of faith, not of law, that it might be by grace; for faith just believes in the

grace shewn, and thus the promise is sure to all the seed, for grace can give it to a Gentile, and faith in a Gentile can receive it, not simply give it to the seed under the law, though faith there could receive it, but to everyone who had the faith of Abraham, who is the father, not of Jews only, but of us all (as it is written, “I have made thee a father of many nations”) before God, the God whom he had believed.

But this introduces another principle. When Abraham received the promise, he was as good as dead. The God in whom he believed is a God above human failure and weakness, and calls things that are not as though they were. Abraham believed God in spite of his deadness and that of Sarah: it was a quasi-resurrection. This introduces yet another great and important principle. Grace on the part of God, and faith on the part of man, we have had, in connection with promise on the one hand, and the redemption that is in Christ on the other. Now power comes in—God’s power; not a dealing with man according to any good or capacity that is in him, but God that raises the dead, and according to this power calls things that are not as though they were. He can make them to be as He calls them. This applies to Abraham’s case, to the Gentiles, and, as to the power in its nature, Christ’s resurrection.

Law does require power in man to fulfil it. God’s raising the dead clearly required no power in the raised one; and things that are not have no capacity to become things that are. Abraham believed God, considered no circumstances which, as to man’s weakness, made it impossible; because He who spoke in truth could do all things in power. This Abraham assumed. Hence, if God spoke, the thing was certain. No lack of power would

make it fail; and this owning of what God was, this faith (which through grace justified God in His word, giving Him His true character) was imputed to him for righteousness. When man justifies God in His works and words and ways, not himself, God justifies him. Those ways are in Christ. But our faith, though in principle the same, has in one very important respect a different character from that of Abraham. He believed that God was able to perform what He had said. We believe that He has raised Christ from the dead. His work is an accomplished work. He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.

But, note, the faith here spoken of is faith in Him who raised Christ. Righteousness is imputed to us as believing on Him who raised up Christ from the dead. So that we own not merely Christ's work, but God's acceptance of it, and God's power to quicken the dead; as John said, "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." God has in power come in, as satisfied, to raise up Christ from the state where our sins (He having taken them on Him through grace) had brought Him. Not to speak of His Person, God could not leave Him there, for He was satisfied as to the sins, and righteously raised Him from the dead in public testimony of it.

And now see how complete is the statement we have had as to our sins. We are justified by God's grace freely. We have redemption in Christ Jesus. We have His blood, a propitiatory through faith in it; God's righteousness in remission; justice in justifying the believer, Christ having been delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, God Himself having raised Him from the dead. Thus all that concerns sins, guilt—what had to be

answered for in the day of judgment—has been fully met; and forgiveness, justification, redemption clearly brought out in righteousness, and this by perfect grace; the whole work of Christ, as to that which had to be answered for, complete; God's seal put upon it in resurrection; grace in this respect complete (for it has much to give also); and we, believers, justified through faith in the sight of God. We shall see that another question arises. But as regards our sins, all we have done, what we should have had to answer for in the day of judgment, the question is completely settled. God has wrought His own work in grace; Christ, who was delivered for our offences, is raised from the dead; God has put His seal on the completion and efficacy of His work. It is in the God who has done so that we believe. His grace has justified us in righteousness.

There is a point here which it is well to note. We have in this part of the epistle no experience. Happy in forgiveness, as a result, no doubt we are; but it is not an internal process issuing in deliverance in the power of divine grace, but a complete work done, through which God's righteousness is declared, God's work meeting the sins by reason of which He has pronounced upon us as guilty—none righteous, no, not one—and proved us such. He has demonstrated all, Jew and Gentile, to be under sin, and justified freely by His grace. It is proved guilt, not experience; complete justification by Christ's being delivered for our offences, not what passes in our hearts. The experience of what is within, and the deliverance, comes afterwards in chapters 7 and 8.

This shews the completeness of this part of the epistle as to its proper subject, and how the gospel refers, first, to guilt and clearing from it—our justification from that

guilt; not to our state or nature, though the fruits of the old man constitute that guilt. It shews, too, how a full free gospel can be preached without touching on our nature, and state by that; though a solid settled condition of soul cannot exist without the experience and deliverance of the subsequent part of the epistle. The natural man can understand forgiveness, the payment of a debt, a child about to be punished, what it is to be pardoned; but a soul under the exercises produced by the Spirit of God can alone understand what sin is within, and deliverance from its power. It is quite true that to have a real work, even as to forgiveness, there must be the conviction of guilt under our sins. Conscience must be reached, guilt must be owned; the statement of the epistle as to that guilt, that we are under sin, must find its personal application and echo in the conscience, our just condemnation endorsed by the conscience as to oneself; so that we should be conscious that we—I— have to be freely justified. But we can see that with the mere consciousness that we have sinned without any real sense of the existence of the old man, of our exclusion from God by it, forgiveness can be understood, nay, it can be supposed, though no real forgiveness is possessed, nor reconciliation effected. It is not insincerity, it is self-delusion; but it shews how the gospel of repentance as to sins of which we are guilty, and remission of these, may be preached without the experience of what we are in ourselves having been wrought in the soul. Genuine acknowledgment of our guilt in the conscience there must be, to have any reality of repentance or forgiveness, but no experimental knowledge of self. This may come before the knowledge of forgiveness, and will generally then be accompanied by great distress of soul, and forgiveness and permanent

rest of conscience will come together. But the two things are clearly distinguished in the epistle, the experience of what we are, coming last; the testimony—God's testimony, proof, and judgment as to universal guilt, forgiveness, and justification, with its blessed results, through Christ's work, delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification—being complete at the end of verse n of chapter 5. Of the experience itself, and our state in the flesh through Adam's fall, we will speak when we come to the subsequent chapters. All I do now is to shew the distinction between the two.

But there is another point I would notice before I return to the course of the epistle's teaching. In the third chapter we find allusion to the mercy-seat; in the end of chapter 4 the history of the scape-goat, at least what answers to the two. Hence the real word in chapter 3:25 is mercy-seat, through faith in His blood. Hence past sins are referred to, and then, not as yet bearing of sins, but such a glorifying of God's character as revealed Him to be just and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus. And this is the testimony to the whole world. Christ is set forth as a mercy-seat through faith in His blood. That first goat was the Lord's lot. All that God is has been perfectly glorified in Christ's death; His majesty, truth, justice as against sin, love (John 13:31, 32; 17:4); without saying who, or how many would be saved. Hence the message of grace and beseeching can go forth to all the world. God is satisfied, glorified, in that blood He has under His eye, and says "Come." Here it is used for forgiveness, and that God might be just in justifying. In the end of chapter 4 it is, He was delivered for our offences; the offences of those who can speak in faith and say "ours"; "it was not written on his

(Abraham's) account alone … but ours also." And here it speaks consequendy of positive offences, for which Christ was delivered up (as the high priest confessed the sins of the people on the head of the scape-goat); for bearing sins, "our sins, in his own body on the tree," is a different thing from glorifying God in His own character, in that He died where sin had come in. Both had their place and special importance; one for God's glory, and that grace might be free in righteousness; the other for clearing us from sin, as needed.

I return now to the general subject defined in the first eleven verses of chapter 5—the full statement of the effect of this redeeming grace of Christ's being delivered for our offences, according to the infinite grace of God. We have two distinct statements in this epistle of the blessedness of believers —the passage which occupies us, chapter 5:1-11, and chapter 8. The former gives us what God Himself is for us in grace, with its blessed consequences; the other, the believer's place in Christ before God, and what God is for him there. The latter presents the believer more fully and completely before God, his evil nature as detected by law, and deliverance from it having been discussed; but the former furnishes more largely and fully what God is in Himself in grace. One is what God is to the sinner, and hence more what God is in Himself, with its consequences in grace; the other, the believer in Christ before God; an advance as to the saint, and most specially blessed in shewing what God is for him, but not so fully what He is in Himself through Christ to men. This is more richly unfolded, consequently, in chapter 5:1-11. We have the whole rich blessing that flows from Christ, from peace with God to joying in Him; but it is

love commended to us while we were sinners (and for that very reason more what it is in God Himself), not a man in Christ before God. Of this we shall see more when we come to chapter 8.

Thus much we must already remark that down to the end of chapter 5:11, the teaching of the blessed Spirit refers to sins; from verse 12 to the end of chapter 8, the question is as to deliverance from sin. The former speaks of Christ delivered for our offences; the latter of our being crucified with Him, and so having died to sin. But our present theme is that He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. We have been also fully taught that it is received by faith as that which is done; that God has accepted it as a satisfying propitiation, proved in raising Christ from the dead—raised consequently for our justification according to God's righteousness. We have had propitiation through faith in His blood in chapter 3—God's righteousness fully declared, just and the justifier of him that believes; and now, in chapter 4, Christ's resurrection for our justification when He had been delivered for our offences. This work, done outside us, our only part in which was our sins (and thank God that we who believe can say they were there), unless we add the hatred that with wicked hands crucified and slew Him, the fruit of God's sovereign and free grace, and Christ being delivered for our offences, has God's seal upon it in resurrection as complete and satisfying (much more, though we go no farther here) as it is the fruit of God's free grace and love to us.

Hence, not only God's righteousness is declared, "just and the justifier of him that believes," but, being justified by faith, we have peace with God. All that was

between us through our sins cleared away, and God having sealed it to us by the resurrection of Christ, we, knowing it by faith, have peace with God. This is a very full expression. Peace with God is with God such as He is. If there was a thing that disturbed His holy nature morally, or if our conscience had got anything on it, we had not peace with God; but there is not. Our justification is absolutely by God Himself, known by faith; so that no spot, no cloud remains. We have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. He has made it, and it is perfect. But by Him also we have access into the grace or favour in which we stand—our present condition; a favour better than life—divine favour. When I look up to God I find, as my present relationship with Him, nothing but divine favour resting upon me. The light of His countenance is unclouded. With the love wherewith He loves Jesus He loves me, and in that I rest. The hope that is before me—such is the worth of Christ's sacrifice—is the glory of God. I triumph in that hope. Into that glory He will bring me. The hope of it brightens with heavenly light the path in which I walk.

This completes what I receive as the effect of the blessed work of Christ and the grace that gave Him, and to me a part in that work by faith; but it is not all. Twice the blessed Spirit adds, "Not only so." I have indeed, in these three points, peace as to all that could make me guilty and take away peace, present favour, and the hope of glory; all that is given me, right into glory, fully stated. Past, present, and future— an eternal future—all perfectly settled in grace; but there is the way there, and more than that, the Giver as well as the gift to think of. All that concerns me as to what grace gives is complete; but I have much to learn, much to be

corrected, perhaps much to be subdued, much that tends to hinder my seeing the hope clearly, and fixing my heart upon it. I find tribulations on the way, and I rejoice and glory in them also. They work patience, a subduing of the will, and the quietness of spirit which that gives.

This leads me to fuller knowledge of myself, separation of heart from the world through which I pass, a clearer consciousness (my portion being in another) of what God is for me by the way; as Israel learnt in the desert what they were, and the patient goodness of God all along the road. They were humbled and proved to know what was in their heart, but manna never failed, even if they loathed it; their clothes waxed not old, nor did their foot swell those forty years. If, through unbelief they turned back from the mount of the Amorites, and must stay in the wilderness some thirty-eight years more, their gracious God turned back and went with them. But this by analogy; for here the apostle does not speak of failure, but of tribulation and its profit—that in which he rejoiced and gloried. In failure he could not. There is such an exercise of heart as both renders us more capable of spiritually discerning what we hope, and weans from the world which tends to shut it out of sight. Our hope is clearer, and we more mature in the consciousness that our whole hope and home is where the new man finds its portion.

But there is another very important element in this, besides the subjective fruit in the state of our soul. I have both the key to all these tribulations and the power which enables me to bear them, and to know their meaning; to connect them with a blessedness which lifts us above them all, and turns us to the grace that uses

them, all to give deeper and eternal blessing—the grace of Him who withdraws not His eyes from the righteous, who deigns to watch over us in detail, to follow our characters and state, and to make everything work together for our good. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. That which is in God—what He is in His nature—is shed abroad, is not only known, but pervades in its power our hearts. It is God's love, but in our hearts, and this by His own presence, here noticed for the first time—the Holy Ghost given to us. The cleansing and justifying being complete and absolute, every obstacle thus removed, the Holy Spirit can come and dwell in us, and bring in what God is in His nature into our hearts. The clearance of evil made way for this, and now the presence of God, such as He is (and He is love), fills the heart.

But the introduction of the Holy Ghost in this place is a truth of the utmost importance. The baptising with the Holy Ghost was one of the two great acts ascribed to the Lord in John 1. This is the practical application of it consequent on the value and efficacy of that blood by which the sins of those that believe have been put away. So, in the Old Testament, the leper was washed with water, then sprinkled with blood, and then anointed with oil. So we are washed with the word, sprinkled with Christ's blood, and then anointed with the Holy Ghost. It is not being born again. That applies to the Holy Ghost's work in unbelievers: it is after we believe that we are sealed. Farther, this sealing is, I think, always associated with forgiveness. "Repent and be baptised," says Peter, "for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." In Acts 10:43, it is when Peter is announcing the remission of sins that the Holy Ghost

comes down on believing Cornelius. And here in Romans the mention of the Holy Ghost comes in when forgiveness and justification have been made known, as in chapter 4, and indeed in chapter 3, and before the experience of what we are, and our being in Christ, is entered upon.

This has its practical importance for souls. The ground of acceptance is clear; the fulness of God's grace to us in Christ, and the hope of glory connected with it, is made sure to us by His death. We are forgiven and sealed. The grace presented to us here is not a matter of what is commonly called experience, but God's perfect love to us when we were sinners, and had no experience of good, at any rate, at all. It depends on Christ's work for us, the value of which is on us before God. Being thus accepted, we are sealed. The completeness of this as to salvation, and joy in it, confidence in God, it is of moment to see. Experience has its place, and an important one, but God's love in salvation, and judgment of Christ's work, is of all importance. Some Christians would oblige souls to have the experience of chapter 7, in order to the salvation of chapter 5 being true. It may come before. When it does, and acceptance in Christ is seen in simplicity, all the subsequent Christian life is one of assured grace, save cases of special discipline. But the acceptance of chapter 5 may be known by itself first (but then justification as forgiveness, applies to what we have done, and is not our being the righteousness of God in Christ); but if so, self-knowledge and our place in Christ must be learned afterwards.

Remark, farther, how, while the enjoyment of the love is by the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, the knowledge and proof of it is in a work done outside of us, and wholly

independent of us, indeed for us, when in an evil and wholly incapable state. “For,” continues the apostle, “when we were yet without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Ungodly, and without strength—such was our state when the glorious work of God’s love was accomplished for us. But this gives us the certainty that the purity and perfectness of God’s own work and nature were in it. It suits us, is without a motive for it in us save our ruined state. God’s love as of Himself alone is its source and efficient cause. It is what is His own. Perhaps for a righteous man some might die—for some good one—dare to die; but God commends His love (that which is proper and peculiar to Himself) in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

We now get a principle of grace full of blessing for us. The Holy Ghost, who reveals the truth, does not reason from what we are to what God will be. Such is ever the reasoning of awakened man, and naturally so, because for conscience and judgment it must be so; only there is defective sense of sin, and a vague thought of mercy which enfeebles the effect of what sense of it there is. But even in the repentant soul this reasoning takes place till we have really met God, and known His grace; as the prodigal talked of being made a hired servant when he had not met his father. The Holy Ghost makes us see clearly that we are lost on the ground of judgment; but He reasons from what God is and has done to the consequence for us. He reasons according to the grace which He reveals. So here (v. 9, 10), much more being justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. If when enemies we were reconciled by His death, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. The Spirit thus reasons

from what God is in grace to its consequences with us, not from our state to its consequences with God. Wherever this last is going on, the soul is yet in a legal state. There is either carelessness and self-delusion, or a mixture of law and grace. In the Holy Ghost's teaching there is no mixture; but either clear condemnation on the ground of responsibility, or salvation and blessing from grace through righteousness.

This closes the first addition to the full statement of salvation found in verses 1, 2. Hope does not make ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given to us; and then we reason from divine grace to its blessed consequences. But this is not yet all— "Not only so"; thus, knowing God, we glory in God Himself, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the reconciliation. We rejoice not only in the salvation received, but in the God who is made known to us in it; as He has been revealed through the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, we joy in God. Blessed truth! It is natural we should rejoice in the salvation given, in the hope of glory, but it is more yet to have learned to joy in God Himself, and to know Him so as to do it. This closes the first part of the epistle. Justified, in God's favour as a present place, and having glory in hope, we have the love of God, a key to all we find on the way, and joy in Him whom we have known through this great salvation.

But in this mere Judaism disappears, and the apostle consequently takes a wider range of thought, and views the whole state of man through the sin of him who stood first as man before God, and involved his race in the consequences of his defection from God. Each one has added his own sins, and that constitutes personal

responsibility: but there is the universal state of all. Adam involved his whole race in sin and death, and in alienation and exclusion from God; only each added his own part; and thus (the reasoning passes from verses 12-18) by one offence, though all were not condemned because of grace, yet the bearing and tendency of the act was universal on the whole race; so by one righteousness was it for justification of life. All were not justified, any more than all condemned; but the bearing of the act in each case was universal, and had the whole race for its sphere, as that on which it bore, to which it applied. It is not upon all, but the bearing and direction of the act in each case. It is the same word as “unto” all, in contrast with “upon” all that believe, in chapter 3:22. Adam’s work bore on all, and so did Christ’s work too.

Then, in a parenthesis from verse 13 to the end of verse 17, we have the place the law holds in connection with this point, besides the act of the two great heads of ruin and blessing. Sin was in the world from Adam to Moses, when no law was yet there; but specific acts could not be put to charge where there was no law forbidding them. The word “imputed” is another word here from the general word for “imputing righteousness,” and means putting a specific thing to the account of anyone; (which the other does not), being found, as already stated, in Philemon 18. Where no law forbade an act, you could not charge it as a transgression. Yet death reigned—the effect and witness of sin being there—over those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression (that is, who had not violated an actual commandment, as Adam did). This is a quotation from Hosea 6:7, where the same principle as to Adam and Moses is stated. They (Israel), like Adam, have

transgressed the covenant. Adam had a formal law; a formal law was given under Moses. But between the two, where there was no formal law, sin and death were found. The ruin was universal; ought not the grace and bearing of Christ's act to be so? That is the force of chapter 5:15. But what was the bearing of the law on this? That, when grace came in, it had a multitude of offences to deal with, as well as in general sin and alienation from God; such is verse 16. Then the superiority of grace is farther shewn in verse 17; that (whereas by one man's offence death reigned by one) not life should reign, but they who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness would reign in life by One, Jesus Christ.

Thus, in every way, "much more" could be said of grace than of sin. It might have a multitude of offences to deal with, but it must at least be as large in its bearing (and as to those to whom it was addressed) as the sin of man. It was also by One Man, of whom the first man had been but the image; the first, the responsible man; the second, the Man who was in God's counsels before the world began. Farther, if it was applied, it was not merely meeting the case, and life reigning where sin and death had, but those who received abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness would themselves reign in life. This is the bearing of the parenthesis of verses 13-17.

In verse 18 we have the universality of the bearing of the act of Adam and of the blessed Lord; in verse 19 the positive efficiency or effect on those who were actually connected with these two heads. "Many" is "the many"—the mass of persons actually connected with each of these heads. The sin of Adam did not confine itself, in its effect, to him. By the disobedience of one, the many

connected with him were constituted sinners. By the obedience of Christ, the many connected with Him were constituted righteous. This is not responsibility and imputation (there every one is dealt with according to his own works, to which judgment and propitiation apply), but a state into which the many were brought by the head to which they belonged, in contrast with personal responsibility. One man's—Adam's—disobedience involved those connected with him in the condition of being sinners; the obedience of One—Christ—constituted those associated with Him righteous, putting them in that state and condition before God. It is in contrast with individual responsibility, though each individual connected with the head is placed in the state consequent on what characterised his conduct. The "many," in their condition, were such before God in consequence of the conduct that characterised the head. It was not what met the actual conduct of the individuals, but a state of the individuals, which was the result of the characteristic action of the one who stood as the representative and head of his race before God. It was a state dependent on the conduct of the head. This is the great point here. The Lord and Adam, by their act and conduct, bring those connected with them into a certain condition.

The law came in by the bye in contrast with a state into which the respective heads brought those connected with them. What is important to see in this passage is, that the state was the consequence of the conduct of the head, not the conduct of the members met by that of the head. Judgment refers to works; this is a state the result of Adam's disobedience or Christ's obedience. The law came in between the two with a special object; it came

in that the offence might abound. This is not the state constituted, but the act of the person under the law which forbade their acts, in contrast with that which affected the universal race by one man's disobedience, and all believers in Christ by His obedience. The law came in by the bye between the two heads of opposite states, the disobedient and the obedient Man, and came in with this intent—to make positive "offence" (not sin) abound. God can do nothing that sin may abound; but, where sin already is, He can send a special prohibition of it, a law, which brings it out in a fuller character—that it is not only evil but a defiance of His authority, an offence and a transgression; a law which the perverse will of man uses as a provocation to offending. Such was the law.

Then the apostle changes his term to go back to his main theme, saying (not where "the offence," but) where "sin" abounded, wherever a child of Adam was, law or no law, wherever the evil was, grace (God coming in in paramount goodness) did much more abound. Sin had reigned unto death, as the present proof of it in all men. Had righteousness, the natural correlative of sin, reigned, it must have been condemnation; but God is love, rich in mercy, and so grace reigned, the sovereign title of God in goodness; but then there must be righteousness, and so it is: grace reigns through righteousness. Not man's indeed, or it would not be grace; but through the obedience of One, the many are constituted righteous, and grace reigns through righteousness (it is the abstract statement of the nature of what is opposed to sin's reigning) unto eternal life, (as sin to death), through Jesus Christ our Lord. A full and clear statement of the ground and way of our salvation!

It is remarkable how, in a few words, scripture brings out the whole truth. In these few words the whole source, and way, and end of our salvation are completely and clearly stated.

In chapter 6 the practical consequence is gone into, the state and condition reviewed experimentally. Now there is deliverance from sin, and the bearing of the law upon the question is gone into; and thus experience comes in. The doctrine as to how we get out of the power of sin is stated distinctly in chapter 6. We may note here that in the first division of the epistle (chaps. 1:18; to 5:11) we have no practical conduct as the fruit of grace. We have full exhortations in chapter 12 and the following chapters as the result of the whole truth, specially indeed of chapter 6; but in the former part the result of our walk in judgment is stated, but no connection of walk with the grace there spoken of. You have the full complete clearance of the guilty sinner, all having been proved to be under sin and guilty before God, but no consequences drawn as to conduct. The righteousness of God is declared in clearing from guilt and forgiving, in justifying the ungodly, peace with God, standing in His favour, and the hope of glory as the consequence; God Himself joyed in; but no consequent walk. God justified the ungodly righteously, and they had peace. Salvation is stated by itself, as far as brought to us here by grace. Here, where the state is spoken of, divine life is fully spoken of; not indeed the details of practice in the way of exhortation, but the principle of divine life in power, delivering us from sin, and setting us in divine liberty in our walk; a liberty, that is, which comes from God, and in which we yield ourselves to God as those that are alive from the dead.

The point settled in the end of chapter 5 is, that by One man's obedience the many in connection with Him are made righteous. The conclusion the world and fleshly reasoning would draw from this is, that if it be so we may live on in sin. To this the apostle answers in what follows. His obedience was unto death. It is by having part in Christ's death that we have part in this righteousness. But having part in death (that is, dying) is not the way to live on in what we are dead to. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? Our very profession of Christianity by baptism was that of being baptised unto His death, having a part in it, made one plant with Him in His death.

Our resurrection with Christ is not spoken of here; that involves union with Him. But we have been buried with Him by baptism unto death; the old man is a judged and crucified thing, by our very profession of Christianity, that, as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, we also should walk in newness of life. It was not now merely a holy blessed life in all that was good, true as that was in Christ's own life down here; but divine power came in when, for us, He was dead, and bringing Him into a new place as man according to all the glory of the Father engaged in His resurrection: so our life was to be a new one, analogous to that. And if it be true that we are planted in the likeness of His death, the other will follow, as surely as life in resurrection by the glory of the Father followed in His case. In its full result this is true even of our bodies. As yet this consequence is not fulfilled; but in His death, as Christians we have avowedly and professedly taken part, so that death to sin is our settled portion down here.

We draw the conclusion as to life, morally now, in full power hereafter. But death to sin we have professedly taken our portion in, “knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” The body of sin is, I apprehend, sin as a whole. The word translated “destroyed “means annulled, rendered powerless. That body (which if alive as the old man, is the seat of lust and doer of sin) is crucified, so as in this character to be set aside and annulled; it has closed its existence. He that is dead is justified from sin. It is not here “sins” or guilt; a man who has died may have to answer for sins, but you cannot accuse him of “sin.” He has neither evil lusts nor a perverse will. And the question now is of our state and condition.

But we see the power of death destroyed by the resurrection of Christ. He is risen, He dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him. For His death was not a mere natural consequence, so to speak, of His state. He came about sin, to take our place as sinners, and died to sin. It was with the object of grace to us, and in respect and view of sin that He died, and did it once, when He had, for our sakes, need to do it. But He did it once for all. It was a work which He had to do in respect of sin, and He has done it—has no more to do with sin. Sinners He will judge, no doubt, but He has done with sin, as occupied with it, once and for ever. Up to the cross, He, the sinless One, had to do with sin; on the cross sin was the whole question, though for the glory of God He was made sin; but now He has done with it once and for ever. He lives past having to do with sin. There is but one thing, even viewed as man, which constitutes

His life, one thing which fills its outgoings—God. In that He lives, He lives to God.

In His life down here He served God perfectly, and lived by the Father, and every step was perfect, having God His Father always before His mind; but He had to do with sin all around Him; He was pressed by it, grieved, a Man of sorrows through it, He had for us to be made sin. Perfect in love manifesting God, perfect in obedience as Man come to do His will, still He came about sin, and was necessarily assailed by it in all around, and, as I have said, was finally to be made sin for us, when fully proved the sinless one Himself—He who knew no sin. But now He has done with it for ever. He died to it here, passed (perfectly accomplishing His work) through death out of the whole scene where He had to do with it, in resurrection into a new state as man, where, in thought, object, and life, He has to do as to His state of life with God only. In that He lives, He lives to God. Nought where He is but what is filled with God—so filled that nothing else can be there save what ministers to His glory. It is not merely the perfectness of His intention (this was always as perfect as His walk; in this sense He always lived to God), but that in which and to which He lives, where for His soul nought else is. It is a blessed thought of man's life, and shews, though the flesh be always the same, what the true Christian state is. Compare 2 Corinthians 1:9; 4:10, 12. His death was a single act in which He died to sin; His life a perpetual present, in which God is all from His soul to His object.

So we are to reckon ourselves (our old man being crucified with Him) dead to sin, and alive to God through Him. It was a new and free life; for the believer was entitled to reckon himself dead unto sin; it was his

condition and place as a believer to do so. If we are alive, we are alive to God, not through Adam at all, but through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thus it was wholly new, and, reckoning ourselves dead to sin, entirely free—able to yield himself to God. Compare Romans 12:2; and read "intelligent "for "reasonable." It is not that sin in the flesh has not its lusts; but the believer as such does not let it reign in the body to obey it in its lusts, seeing he is free in the power of a new life; for so the believer is accounted free to walk in the power and after the things which belong to this new life. He holds the reins, and does not allow sin to use the body for its lusts—the lusts of sin. Nor does this freeman give up his members to be instruments of righteousness unto sin—that evil thing to which he was once a slave. He yields himself to God as one alive from the dead, for, as to his life born of Adam, he had died to sin, but now lives, and yields himself and his members as instruments of righteousness to God.

For sin has not dominion over us, because we are not under law, but under grace: a grave and important sentence. Being under law leaves me under the dominion of sin. What we want is a free life, free from bondage to sin; for he that commits sin, says the Lord, is the slave of sin. Law gives neither life nor freedom nor strength, nor even an object which may turn our hearts elsewhere. It forbids, rightly and necessarily, the sins, but gives no life nor power. But under grace we have power. Life is given, strength is given, and an object is given; none of which, as we have seen, law gives. Thus, under grace, sin has no dominion over me; under law it has. It is beautiful to see, while it is all grace, still how we are given to yield ourselves to God—true freedom, in which sin has no dominion over us; and, while the power

comes from on high, we are really set free, and allowed to give ourselves willingly and freely to God.

Here, then, the apostle takes up this freedom and reasons on it—freedom, not in the old and sinful Adam, but, in that I am alive to God through Jesus Christ, I am free. The law forbids sin and lust, but does not deliver. I am not under it. I am freed from the dominion of sin, and not under law; freed from the dominion of sin, because I am not placed under law but under grace. Shall I then sin because I am not under a law which forbids it, and which curses me if I do it? God forbid.

And now he returns to the great principle of the Gentile condition. If I yield myself to sin, as a slave, to obey it, I am its slave; and sin reigned by death without law being there. Death was the natural and appointed wages of sin, and that as the judgment of God. We could not say obedience unto life; for if we obey, we are alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, but it has the fruit of practical righteousness. And note the character here of what is opposed to sin; not in itself righteousness—the doing right as known by conscience or law—but obedience. We are alive to God, and that is, and must be always, obedience. We cannot live to God otherwise than in obedience. So Christ lived. He was the obedient Man —came to do God's will. His Father's will was the motive of all He did. He lived by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God. His path, consequently, was practical righteousness, and the pattern of it. So the apostle thanks God that, whereas they had been slaves of sin, they had obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine delivered to them.

And here we learn the spring and character of this obedience. It is the obedience of faith, the reception of the word of God into the heart. This forms the link of obedience between the soul and God. The same reception of the word gives life. Of His own will begat He us by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. It is life, it is an obedient life, in truth, the life of Christ in us; and He is the obedient Man. Thus made free from sin—for this is the great point here—they had become, yielding themselves up to obey, slaves to righteousness (using “slave” as a figure he excuses, for it is true liberty, but to make it plain to flesh’s infirmity of understanding); for as they had formerly given up their members as slaves to uncleanness and to lawlessness, only to be lawless, letting loose an evil will which bore no fruit, so now he exhorts them to yield their members (for they were free) slaves to righteousness. But here there was a blessed result, holiness, a separation of heart to God in the true knowledge of Him, the soul brought into His image, as expressed in Colossians 3:10 and Ephesians 4:23, 24 (there more in its nature, here in practical growth, but the same general truth).

The apostle continues the figure, and appeals to their consciousness of what had passed. They had been slaves of sin, and in no way subject to righteousness. What fruit had they then in the things they were now ashamed of? It was fruitless wasting of their members in lawlessness, and the end death. But now, free from sin—his great theme, as we have seen—free in the sense of out of bondage, no longer sin’s slaves (such alone is the sense of the words here), and become slaves to God, entirely given up to serve Him, we have our fruit unto holiness;

not only the end everlasting life, but by the way growing in knowledge of God, and likeness to Him, and separation of heart to Him from all evil, according to what He is. Walking in the path of obedience to Him, and so with Him, the soul is in that delivered from the power of evil, which is in will and lust, neither of which is its obedience.

This is an immense privilege, this growing up into the knowledge of God and intimacy with Him, acquaintance with God. Will never can do this. But in our right place with God we grow in His knowledge, we live more in those things that are found with Him—that He takes pleasure in; and that is holiness. Obedience is not holiness, a heart given up to obey God; but it is the path in which holy affections, springing from Him, and free before Him, are found. The end is everlasting life, received in its full result in glory, as it is in the purpose of God. But that is the gift of God. The path to it is the path of obedience and holiness, but itself is the gift of God. Death we have earned—it is the wages of sin; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is not merely that eternal life is the gift of God, but the gift of God is nothing less than eternal life. Death is purposely looked at in its simple character of death. No doubt it is judgment on sin here in this world, and implies, unless redemption comes in, the judgment which comes after. It is the present effect of judgment on sin, and the divine officer and witness of sin, to conduct us to judgment, according to wrath revealed from heaven. But here it is the end of life which fruitless sin worked. It does lead to judgment— judgment of works done while living. God gives eternal life.

To recapitulate this important chapter. First, in reply to continuing in sin, we have found part in death, Christ's death, in order to be justified; that is not living on in such a life, but the contrary. Christ has died, and we esteem ourselves dead (compare i Pet. 2:24; 4:1), the Christian being thus alive to God in the power of a new life. The first principle then, in which the flesh's judgment of the effect of the obedience of One constituting us righteous is controverted, is that we have part in the righteousness by having part in death, by being associated with Christ in His death (that is, in death to sin, which, clearly, is not living on in it). And we are to reckon ourselves dead, and alive to God in Jesus. But then comes the difficulty. We are not really dead, though called on to account ourselves so: how can we be free from the power of sin? This brings in the contrast with law. Law did not give power over sin in the flesh. It forbade its working and fruits, as it ought to do, but gave no freedom from it, no power against it. But sin shall not have dominion over us who believe, because we are not under law but under grace, and grace does give power—does set free. I am not to let sin reign; and this frees me from its dominion. I am made free from sin, that is, delivered from captivity to it. Being free, I am to yield myself to God and righteousness, give myself up to Him, and my members, once instruments of lusts, as instruments of righteousness. It is the freedom of grace and divine life in power.

This is the general doctrine: Christ having died, we reckon ourselves dead as if we had done so. He who is become our life, the true I, has died. I have died—have been crucified— with Him, and, as a Christian, do not own the flesh to be any more alive at all. I speak of all

that has happened to Christ as if it had happened to me, because He is become my life, and I live by Him; as a son (whose father had not only paid his debts, but made him a partner) would speak of “our capital, our connections,” because he is partner, though he brought nothing in, and all was done and acquired before he became partner; so we in much truer, because living, association with the Lord. Only, as I have remarked, we have not ascension, nor union with Him, nor resurrection with Him, which involves it; but the death of the old man, and life in Christ, and so freedom from sin—the full answer to the allegation that having righteousness in Him gave license to sin. One important remark to make here is, that the true question is one of power. A rule of right is not power over an evil nature. Of this we shall see more; but even here we find that the reigning of sin in our mortal bodies, having dominion over us, is the real question. In point of fact we are not under law; but that is subsisting power in life, grace which gives it, for a mere (however just) claim of righteousness from one that was a sinner. The first answer to the allegation that being constituted righteous by Christ’s obedience gives licence to sin is, that we have been planted in the likeness of His death—have been crucified with Him. This applies to sin in the nature. But, besides this, we have grace contrasted with law, giving liberty from the dominion of sin and the slavery we were under to it, which law did not. We are free to live to God.

On this follows a full discussion of law. We are free from law, following the same great fundamental principle that we have been crucified with Christ. Now law has power over a man as long as he lives. This is illustrated by the

case of marriage, and the law or bond of husband and wife, which lasts evidently as long as one lives, and can no longer; the survivor is free to be to another when one is dead. It is of all importance to the understanding of this chapter to see that the whole subject treated is the bearing of the law—the connection of a soul with it. First, the doctrine on the subject and the distinction of a soul being under law, or connected in life with a risen Christ; and then the experience of a soul quickened and renewed in its desires and delights, but not knowing deliverance by the knowledge that it has died with Christ, and is now connected with another—Christ raised from the dead. The description of the deliverance follows, and the condition of the delivered soul in chapter 8.

Law has power over a man as long as he lives—and cannot have it longer; the person to whom it applies exists no longer. If one to be punished for crime dies, law can no longer reach him. We have seen, in chapter 6, that the fact of not being under law does not cause to live in sin; but that, being under law, one has no power to resist it. It requires, but it does not free from the dominion of sin. But we have become dead to the law by the body of Christ. Had the law reached ourselves, it would have been death, but it would have been condemnation also.18 But we are delivered, being dead to the law, by the body of Christ. The figure is changed. Death puts an end to the bond, but it is we who die; yet not actually we, but Christ effectually for us; and now we are united to Him who is raised, that, the power of life being there, we should bring forth fruit—not merely be dead to sin—unto God.

Having thus died as Adam's children, in that Christ has died, we are no longer in the flesh, in that nature or place and standing before God. We do not stand as Adam's children before God at all. We have died as such. We say therefore, "when we were in the flesh" —a thing we could not say if still in it; when we were, the motions of sin which were by the law wrought to bring forth fruit unto death. The prohibition of a will or lust, though right, does but provoke; it makes you think of the object, and does not take away the lust; it does not change the nature. Were I to say to a lover of money, "You must not desire that gold," it would only awaken the desire. Do I resist a wilful child? He only pushes the harder against the obstacle opposed to him. The motions of sins are by the law—a poor way of holiness or righteousness. They wrought in us to produce actual sin unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, having died in that in which we were held. The life in which we were connected with it is ended; the bond which attached to that life exists no more, ending with the life it subsisted in. The law addressed itself to the child of Adam, and required from him what was according to God's will. Man was in sin, not subject to the law of God; nor could his sinful flesh be so, or it would not have been sinful flesh. The law only stirred up that flesh in its will and lusts, but now with Christ we have died; the bond with the law is broken in our death with Christ, and we are connected with Christ risen, serving in the newness of the spirit, not in the oldness of the letter; bound to a husband— not however the law, but Christ. We could not have both together.

That is the great point here. Chapter 6 laid the groundwork of doctrine and truth, namely, that our old

man is crucified with Christ. We are for faith dead. Chapter 7 takes up the effect of this on the connection of the child of Adam with law. Death has dissolved the bond,19 and we are to another—to Christ risen, now to bring forth fruit to God, for we are alive unto Him. The whole point of the passage is, that we cannot have the law and Christ together—the two husbands at once. It is impossible. But our deliverance from the law is by having died to sin. Christ risen is now our life and husband, where there is power to bring forth fruit to God, which the sinful flesh never could do. The contrast of Christianity with law is not only for justifying, but for life, obedience, and fruit-bearing. Under law we are under the dominion (not guilt merely) of sin; in Christ made free, and able to bring forth fruit to God.

But this is not all. The law has its use, namely, in bringing out the consciousness of what we are—of our state. Was it the fault of the law, this dominion of sin, while we were under it? Nay, it was the fault of the sin, and lust which the law condemned. “But that,” says the apostle, “I had not known, unless the law had said, Thou shalt not lust.” If he had murdered, he would have known the fact; his natural conscience would have taken cognisance of it. But we are not treating of sins now (as before observed), but of sin. I had not known that, unless the law had dealt with its first movements as evil. Many have committed no crimes—have neither murdered, stolen, nor committed adultery; but who has never lusted? It would be to say, I am not a child of Adam at all. And note here, we are not speaking of guilt by acts, but of state; not of judgment, nor of forgiveness, but of deliverance, of setting free. And note further here, how great the error is of those who hold lust not to

be sin if not consented to. The object here is to detect the evil nature by its first motion—lust. Not, indeed, what we have done, but what we are; and the sinfulness of flesh is detected by that first movement, which is lust —will in evil. It proves, by its sinfulness, the sinful source in me. I know that in me dwells no good. Important though humbling discovery! Not, I repeat, what I have done, but what I am; but how important that! What simple folly the thought to make the child of Adam good, unless he be born again!

God's way is, not to improve the wilding, but to cut it down and graft it. Then, when we are grafted with Christ, the fruit of that life is to be brought forth. Law does not condemn the nature nor consequently treat man as lost. Law supposes it is yet to be proved and trusted, but forbids what is its only first movement—lust. Law thus gives the knowledge of what it is. The true force of the word translated "nay," in verse 7, is "but." And note, it is sin, not sins; for he would not, as natural men do not, have judged and taken cognisance of lust in himself as evil and sin, unless the law had said, Thou shalt not lust. The law was thus a means, not of righteousness, but of the knowledge of sin. By it, moreover, sin deceived and killed us. It took its occasion, or point of attack, from the law. Thus did Satan come when Adam was innocent. Now sin takes the prohibition to provoke the will and suggest the lust; for, till the law came in and forbade it, the conscience took no cognisance of lust.

We must remember he is not treating of sins, but of sin. This was provoked and stimulated by the commandment; without it, sin was dead. But when the commandment came, sin revived, and guilt and death came upon my

conscience. Otherwise there was no sentence of death in the conscience by sin. Sins would be judged in the day of judgment, bringing condemnation; but a sinful nature, as such, does not give a bad conscience. We remain alive, untested, unawakened. I was a living child of Adam, unconscious of sin, as we see hundreds; but when the law of God forbade lust, the conscience was affected, and I died under its judgment. What had said, Do this and live, and was thus ordained for life, I experimentally found to be to death. I took up the law, thinking I had power to be good and righteous by it: sin profited by it thus to deceive me and bring me into death by the commandment. Still it was to profit. Sin became by the commandment exceeding sinful. It was there, and I unconscious of it as a fatal evil in my flesh (we are not speaking of committed sins); but it appeared as sin when the law came, and became exceeding sinful. It appeared in its true nature of sin, and took the characteristic, moreover, of opposition to, and transgression of, the holy, just, and good will of God.

But another element comes in here: the spiritual judgment which can thus estimate all this— “We know.” This is a technical expression for knowledge belonging to the Christian as such. See 1 Cor. 8:4; 2 Cor. 5:1; 1 John 3:2; ch. 5:13; and other places. We know the spirituality of the law; not applying it to crimes merely, but to the inward man. But if I look at myself as a child of Adam, I am carried a captive to sin, sold under it. I say, a child of Adam; for the apostle says, “in me, that is, in my flesh.” He is looking at the man as standing on that ground with Christian knowledge as to it, but as married to the first husband—the law: “When we were in the flesh.” It is Christian intelligence applied to the

judgment of the state of (not an unrenewed person in mind and desire, but) one under the law. Hence the law only is mentioned, not Christ or the Spirit, till the cry for deliverance from that state come. It is not a question whether the flesh is in us; but “when we were in the flesh,” the motions of sin there, we being met in that state by the requirements of law in our conscience, not as redeemed and dead with Christ, delivered and having the power of life in Him, consciously in that state.

Three immensely important lessons are learned, under divine teaching, in the conflict connected with this state. First, in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. This is not the guilt of having sinned, but the knowledge of what we are, that is, as flesh. Next, I learn that it is not I; for, being renewed, I hate it—would it not at any time: the true I hates this. It is then sin in me, not I—a very important lesson to learn. Thirdly, if it is not I, it is too strong for me. To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I know not. But it is well to enter into this a little more in detail. It is not really any individual person, but the judgment of a nature; but a nature which (till I know redemption, and that I have died to sin with Christ, and am in Him) constitutes myself, for the conscience. It is to be remarked that the will is supposed always right, and good never to be done. This is not the Christian state. We can do all things through Him that strengthens us.

Further, the man here is a slave; in chapter 8:2 he is set free. In chap. 7:5 we are supposed to be in the flesh; in chapter 8:9, we are not in the flesh, if the Spirit of God dwell in us. If a man be not dead with Christ, he is fully in the flesh. If he do not know it, the conscience and mind are on that ground with God. What he is, not what

Christ is, is the ground on which he judges of his state before God. As to his conscious standing, he is in the flesh; and it is the process of deliverance from this by the thorough humiliation of self-knowledge that is here described. The operation of the law is what is contemplated; grace working in the man, but he, as to his mind and conscience, under law undelivered. By the law is the knowledge of sin. Grace has given him to see that the law is spiritual. It is not sins, but sin, which is in question. Conscience has by grace recognised that the law is good, yea, the spirit consents to it; more than that, he delights in it, after the inner man. He is a renewed man.

We have first, then, the state of the man. Light from God has come in. The law is spiritual for him; but he is carnal, a slave to (sold under) sin; for he sees himself in flesh still alive—in that life of a child of Adam in which the law asserts its claim. “I am (that is consciousness, individually) carnal,” “sold under sin.” That is, you have a man looking at himself as in flesh, and knowing that the law is spiritual, perceiving it by divine teaching.

We have then, further (this being the state of the person’s soul), two points in respect of the law—nothing, mark, in respect of Christ and the Spirit. He is not there yet, but on the way, getting, while taught of God, knowledge of sin (that is, of himself under law). In the first case he is doing evil, but would not; he does what he hates. He does wrong, but would not. He consents to the law that it is good. His conscience and mind accept it as right—coincide with it, but he does the contrary; but thus under grace, by this very word, he is taught that it is not he does it, but sin that dwells in him. He has a new man, a new life, in which, thus taught, he can

treat sin as a stranger, though dwelling in him—as not himself. And now he has experimentally learnt, not mere doctrine, even though taught of God, as to something outside himself— “we know” —but something about himself, and a great lesson too: “I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” The flesh is a judged nature, a great point of progress. And now the second point in the renewed man comes out—the positive will to do good. He delights in the law of God in the inner man—not merely consents, having it as his own approved rule in conscience, but he would do good; but evil is there—he cannot perform good. Power is wholly wanting: the law gives none. There is a law in his members, a constantly operating power of evil which brings him into captivity, though now against his will.

Poor wretched man! But (immense advantage) he knows it; he knows himself. Desires and efforts to do right have resulted in this—in the knowledge of himself and his real state: in him, that is, in his flesh, there is no good thing. But it is not (now he is quickened of God) himself at all. But that makes out no righteousness for him, no deliverance from the power of sin; he is still under it, being under law. It is an immense lesson to learn, that we have no power. (Like the poor man at the pool of Bethesda, the disease of which he had to be healed had taken away, even if he willed, the strength through which he could get healed; John 5.) Thus taught, the man ceases to look to being better, or to doing; he has learned what he is, and looks for a Deliverer. The moment God has brought him there, all is clear. He thanks God through Jesus Christ our Lord. But though the subject treated be the experience of the soul under the law when its spirituality is known through grace, the

thing learned is not what the law is, but what sin is—what we are. By the law is the knowledge of sin. Hence, though the process be carried on under law, by which through the secret working of grace that knowledge is acquired, yet the thing we have learnt to know—what sin in the flesh is—is always true.

Hence, although as we have said it is the description of a soul under law, yet it is in a way in which the lesson remains for the Christian at all times. Not that he is ever under law, or in the flesh—he never is: he has died as connected with that first husband, and for faith the flesh is dead, and he is delivered; but the lesson he has learned remains always true. In him, that is, in his flesh, dwells no good thing. And it is experimentally known. The flesh may deceive him if he is careless, and he forget to bear about in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus, but it can no longer deceive him as to what it is itself. He may have left a door open in his house to an unfaithful servant, but he does not now take him for a trustworthy or unsuspected one. And the difference is immense. The power of flesh is broken. And, further, he has no thought of being in the flesh before God. The Galatians shew his position. “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, that ye may not do the things that ye would.” “But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” You are not in Romans 7, though the evil flesh be there. You are free with the liberty wherewith Christ has set you free. Be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage. Hence, too, after the deliverance is spoken of here, the abiding fact of the two natures is affirmed, though going on further than the law, the subject before us. “So, then, I myself

with the mind serve the law of God; with the flesh, the law of sin."

In result, then, the state described is that of a soul under the law, but sin comes to be known, and conflict with this remains—flesh remains flesh. But it is a very different thing to have to say to it, when we have no strength, when we are sold under it, and it has us down, in the combat, under the law of sin, and to be able to say, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The natures are the same; but it is one thing, having them, to be under the law, which is the strength of sin, and having died with Christ to have the life and Spirit of Christ, which is the strength of godliness; to be led captive as a rule or law by sin though hating it, or to rejoice in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. This freedom, and the state of the believer in it, we shall find developed in chapter 8. The two points before us are, deliverance, and the abiding of the law of sin in the flesh; only that it is not I. That is the mind which serves the law of God. That is experimental and learned.

But there are two things the apostle now assumes of the Christian. What constitutes him such—being in Christ, and the Spirit of God dwelling in him? What belongs to such is another thing. That is being a Christian. But we must remark that the measure of walk and practical effect is limited, as all here is, to human responsibility. One passage alone connects us with the counsels of God, and then only as a great general truth. But the result in practice takes the measure of human responsibility, whatever the deliverance needed to enable us to meet it.

For the man in Christ, then, there can be no condemnation. Such is the first statement in this chapter. It will be remembered that it was said there were two passages descriptive of the Christian's blessing, chapter 5:1-11, and chapter 8, the former already treated of, and what now occupies us: that, the blessing flowing from what God was towards us in grace; this, the believer's status before God. Hence here it is "there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"—not for those for whose sins Christ has died. These last are forgiven, the man justified and fully blest; but it is not his new standing as one who has died as in the flesh, and is alive to God in Christ; who is married to Him that is risen from the dead. How could there be condemnation for those who are in Christ? It would be, so to speak, like condemning Christ.

But the reason is given in connection with what precedes; and that on the side of good in the power of life in Christ on the one side, and as to the evil, the condemnation of sin in the flesh, on the other. The being in Christ is the great and sure ground; but the conditions and ground of it are added when this is the case. The law of sin and death has lost its power. I have another principle of life in power in me, which has its own constant nature and rule; for such is the force of "law" here— "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." This alludes to the breath, or spirit of life, breathed into Adam. Now it was spiritual or divine life in the power of the Spirit of Christ in us; and this had its constant law and character, and was power which had made the Christian free from the law of sin and death—the deadly principle which ruled in him before, as alive in the flesh. It is there, no doubt; but he is set free from

it. It has no dominion. There is another operative life and power, which has its own determined and unvarying characters, and which works in power; so that I am not under the dominion of sin. That is the side of God— what I am before God in life.

Then comes the evil nature, and why I am not condemned for it. The law could not work good nor righteousness in me because of it; it could not bring the question of flesh to an end before God; it could neither justify nor deliver me; could not clear me of the evil that is in it before God. Where sin in the flesh was, law could not hinder its acting, nor justify me while it was there; it could not operate the good it required. It only required the good, and provoked the sin. But “God, sending his own Son,” sinless surely, but in form and fashion of one of these sinners in flesh, “in the likeness of sinful. flesh, and for sin” (that is, as a sacrifice for sin) “condemned sin in the flesh.” The evil thing, so hateful, condemnable for God and for the new man, has been condemned when Christ was a sacrifice for sin. Death and condemnation of sin in the flesh went together, and I am dead to it; and its condemnation is past and settled when Christ was a sacrifice for sin. There is no allowance of it, which the new man even could not bear. A nature is not to be forgiven. But its condemnation was in that which removed all condemnation from me, and was at the same time death to it.

Thus there can be no condemnation for one in Christ. Not only are the sins blotted out, but the nature which produced them has been condemned, that is, sin in the flesh; and, as to my actual state, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of it. Thus the old man is condemned and dead, and the new

man lives and walks, so that the claim of the law (its righteousness, the sum of what it requires) is fulfilled in us, because we are not under it, but under grace. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free, and I walk not according to the flesh, which the law forbids, but according to the Spirit, against whose fruits there is no law; yea, through the power of the Spirit of God I walk after that which it leads me into—the life of Christ in this world. And this walking after the Spirit gives its true character to the walk of the Christian in this world.

As I have said, as Christ is contrasted with law for righteousness, the Spirit (Christ as life in the power of the Spirit) of God in us is contrasted with the righteous but powerless law for our walk and rule; deadness to sin, and life in the power of the Spirit of God. This the apostle develops. In fact, commencing with the “no condemnation” to the end of verse n is the unfolding of the answer to “Who shall deliver?” On the words “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” hangs a full description of both; of the Christian life as flowing from the Holy Ghost, and of the flesh. Each has its own objects according to its nature. There are things of the flesh and things of the Spirit—not merely right and wrong, but objects which belong to each.

Thus there are two natures, with their respective objects, and with the new one the power of the Spirit of God, instead of one, the old one, and a law which fruitlessly forbade its desires as well as its acts. They that are after the flesh are governed by its principles: mind, will, have their object in the things which that nature craves after. They that follow the leadings of the Spirit are under His power in the things the Spirit

brings to us, and sets the mind upon. Now the mind of the flesh is death; the mind of the Spirit is life and peace. That is, they are characterised respectively by these things as immediately and necessarily flowing from them, or accompanying them. For the mind of the flesh is enmity against God, resists His authority, rejects His will, rises up against Him and His authority, does not like it should exist, and consequently hates Him. It is not hence subject to the law, nor can be. Its lusts will not have what it claims, nor its self-will bow to the claim itself. God comes in by law, asserts authority, and forbids lust; but the flesh knows no obedience, loves its will and its lust, and hates God. Self-will cannot like subjection because it is self-will, nor lust what forbids lust. But God must come in thus with law to flesh. What is essential to flesh, it is essential to God to contradict, and it is enmity against Him. They that are in the flesh cannot then please Him. Those whose life is in the first Adam cannot please God. There the flesh leads and governs. Their place of standing is in Adam life. But this is not so if the Spirit of God dwell in us. This characterises, leads, forms the life of him in whom it dwells. God's Spirit, in living power, forms and characterises the state of the soul.

This, then, characterises the Christian, and distinguishes him: the Spirit of God dwells in him. Such an one is not in the flesh (that is not his standing), but in the Spirit. This is clearly and in terms the contrary of the state, "when we were in the flesh"; that is, of chapter 7 experience. Then the motions of sin, which were by the law wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. And, note, it is not here being born again. It is the Spirit of God dwelling in us. True, if we

are born again, there are new desires, the evil of the flesh is felt. But this is not liberty and power. But where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty, with God and from sin. It is the fruit of redemption by Christ—of the ministry of righteousness and the Spirit. Christ has redeemed, justified, and cleansed us. The blood of sprinkling having made us perfectly clean20 in God's sight, the Holy Ghost comes to dwell in us, the seal of the value of that blood, and consequently, so coming to dwell in us, gives us the consciousness that we are in a new place before God—not in the flesh, not in our natural Adam state, but in the condition in which the Spirit sets us in God's presence. This position belongs only to those who have the Spirit. It is the Spirit of Christ. If any man have not this, he has not the proper Christian place, is not of Christ, does not belong to Him according to the power of redemption, which brings us before God according to its own efficacy, of which the Spirit's presence and indwelling is the characteristic seal and living power—that by which those who have entered into this place are distinguished.

Being born again does not give this. It may (and by itself, does) lead to the cry— "Who shall deliver me?" It does not tell us we are redeemed. It gives desires and hopes, but may equally increase fears, because it strengthens the sense of responsibility, giving spiritual apprehension of the measure of it; but it gives no power of deliverance from the evil it makes us sensible of. But the redemption which is in Christ delivers. There is no condemnation for those who are in Him. And if we are in Him, He is in us, the power, as the source, of a new life; yea, that life itself. And this is the Christian; such an one is actually His;21 Romans 8:9. Those born of God may

be under the law as to their state of mind, dwelling on their own responsibility as alive in flesh, this side of redemption—married to the first husband, and the bond not broken by death, as to their state. They are not united to the second husband in their faith—to Him who is raised from the dead—passed into a new sphere (which is indeed the fruit of redemption for us), where there can be no condemnation; for we are accepted in Christ, and the presence of the Holy Ghost characterises our position.

We now find in verse 10, the power which produces the effect, doctrinally stated in chapter 6 as our position. “If Christ be in you, the body is dead, because of sin.” Sin is its only fruit if it live; but if Christ be in one the power of life, the body, as to all will, has its place in death. What then is practically life? The Spirit that is to produce righteousness. This is the full answer to its being liberty to sin, or leading to it, because we are not under law. But this deliverance goes farther. If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in us, He who raised up Christ from the dead shall quicken our mortal bodies by reason of His Spirit which dwelleth in us. This is full and final deliverance, even as to the body. We may remark that the Spirit is spoken of in three ways here: as the Spirit of God, contrasted with flesh— with man as he is; as the Spirit of Christ, or Christ in us, formative of our practical state; thirdly, as the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus, and the assurance of our mortal bodies being quickened, and thus our possessing full liberty in the highest sense. For all this is not forgiveness sought, nor justification, but deliverance from a state we are made conscious of being in.

A further remark (which leads us to the structure of the whole chapter) has here to be made. In the verses we have been considering, the Spirit, though spoken of as indwelling, is viewed as the source and power of life characterising the man: “The Spirit is life because of righteousness.” After this He is spoken of as a distinct and separate Person, acting on and in us— “with our spirit.” This is the second part of the chapter. The third and last part is, not what God is in us by His Spirit, but for us, securing us in the blessing which it is His purpose to give.

We may now come to the second part of the chapter. It is preceded by two verses of practical consequence; verses 12,13. “We are not debtors to the flesh.” It has no claim or title over us. It has done us all the evil it can, and only evil; and it has been condemned pn the cross of Christ, and we are dead to it, having been crucified with Him. Living after it ends in death, but, mortifying the deeds of the body (the things which flow from its will if left to work), we shall live. But now the instruction goes farther, and shews us the relationship the Spirit brings us consciously into, and not merely the state as hitherto; “As many as are led by the Spirit of God these are the sons of God.” This flows directly from the whole position we are brought into, in contrast with that we were in under the law—a position God has brought us into by grace, through redemption—not the bondage and fear in which we were toward Him under the law; the fruit of divine grace in Christ—not the effect of failure in responsibility in presence of a divine claim upon us. We are sons- of God, and cry, “Abba, Father,” having the consciousness of being sons by having the Spirit, which is in us a Spirit of adoption.

It is well to remark, as so frequently occurring in this chapter, that “for” expresses in very many passages no direct inference on the part of the apostle, but introduces some statement confirmatory of the general principle which is in the apostle’s mind. Thus, in verses 13, 14, there is no direct inference, though the connection be more immediate in verse 13. Verse 14 goes on to give the whole condition of him who has the Spirit, suggested by the mention of the Spirit exercised in moral power over the walk in verse 13. Such a mortifying of the deeds of the body is natural in the Christian, for such is their real state and character as having the Spirit. But it is in no way “Ye shall live, for,” etc. But he has in all the chapter the man in Christ before his eye, shewing what is his character, and what qualities and privileges belong to him as such.

We have now to consider what is said concerning the Spirit as dwelling in us. We are sons, and by the Spirit cry, “Abba, Father,” in the consciousness of being so. The Holy Ghost Himself (here we have Him definitely as a distinct Person) “beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.” It is a distinct definite testimony of the Spirit who dwells in us that we are such; not a proving by the word on examination of ourselves (a false and unscriptural and evil procedure), but the testimony of the Holy Ghost Himself dwelling in us, which He bears to us as so dwelling in us. We have the consciousness and estate of the mind of the Spirit in us; but He Himself, as dwelling in us, bears consciously also to us the witness that we are sons. We are in the conscious relationship, but He who is in us gives the confidence-producing testimony.

But if we are children, we are heirs. We are heirs of God naturally as His children, and (as Christ is the great heir and firstborn) joint-heirs with Christ. But then the whole path and character of Christ as Man characterises us. His life and Spirit being in us, the spring of what we are, our mind must be in character and nature His. But He suffered here, and now is glorified as Man, ready to inherit all things. We too, then, must suffer with Him; not exactly for Him—this is a special privilege—but with Him. He could not (walking in holy love and grace, holy in all His ways, and heavenly) but suffer in the midst of a sinful world rejecting His love. His Spirit must have been ever grieved by sin, and the sorrow that was all around Him. So the saint in the measure in which he walks in the power of His Spirit, as he says in Timothy, "If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him." It is a whole Christ: the same life has its natural consequences here and in heaven in the place of sons; a heavenly Man in this world, and in the heaven of God in holy glory. We are co-glorified, and co-sufferers. But the sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory. I apprehend "in us" is our whole state as well as our persons.

We have, then, a beautiful connection of the suffering and glory, through the dwelling of the Spirit in us. He gives us to know we are sons, and is an earnest and revealer of the glory while we are in this world of sorrow. The creature is in the state which results from the fall, but grace causes it on the other hand to wait for our being in glory for its deliverance. It must be so; the unintelligent creature cannot be brought to the rest of God's glory when the heirs for whom it is ordered are not there. It waits for the manifestation of the sons. The liberty of grace it cannot enter into (which is intelligent

and spiritual— “soul-salvation”); but the liberty of glory will be its deliverance also. It was subjected to vanity, not by its will, but by reason of another, Adam—but not ever to be left there. It also will have its deliverance in the liberty of glory; for this applies to the whole state of things, not merely to the relationship of souls with God.

Such is the general statement. And in this we get the first and fullest glimpse in Romans of the counsels of God. We shall find something of them as to the Jews in chapter 11, but in this the general result in the sphere of glory of the Son of man, though only briefly stated in connection with the subject of deliverance, which here applies to the whole creation. But this is the general statement of this truth.

What follows is our personal connection with it as Christians. We know (we Christians, having the mind of Christ, know) that the world which flesh is trying to improve as its home is groaning and travailing in pain through the fall (though grace and deliverance and reconciliation are received by us). And this is not simply true of the creature around us: our body is part of this. We being creatures have to wait for the redemption of this—the actual adoption and salvation. The redemption of the body and of the purchased possession, in a general sense, go together. The redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, we have; but the Spirit we have received in consequence is only the earnest of the other. It is in this sense we are saved in hope. What was in God’s purpose to give us in salvation we have not yet (that is in glory with Christ); but the work is wrought which saves us, and we have it by the Holy Ghost. We stand (having received the Holy Ghost) between the accomplished work which saves us and entitles to the

inheritance (and know it is accomplished, having, withal, been sealed for the day of redemption), and the exercise of power which shall bring the full redemption in when Jesus comes again. We, by the Spirit, look back to the accomplishment of the work, and understand its value; and by the same Spirit look forward to Christ's second coming to accomplish all and bring in the glory. Meanwhile we have these earthen vessels, our unredeemed bodies—unredeemed as to power and deliverance; for the body also is the Lord's, bought with a price; and though we have the firstfruits of the Spirit (for the Spirit will again be poured out as the latter rain for millennial blessing), we suffer with Him who suffered here, connected with the glorious inheritance by the Spirit, and with the creation fallen in the first Adam by the body; and we groan (saved in hope) for the redemption of the body, and wait for that and the inheritance with patience—for that which is not yet seen.

We have seen that the Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are sons, and so heirs—heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. For the inheritance we wait. But He takes part also in the infirmities in which we find ourselves, through our connection with the fallen inheritance through the body. But the part we take through the body in the sufferings of the fallen creation is not in the selfishness of a sufferer, but we become, by the Holy Ghost, the voice of all this sorrow according to God. There are cases, no doubt, where we know the will of God, and can (praying in the Holy Ghost) expect an answer according to our demand of God. But there is a mass of sorrow which we feel according to God by the Holy Ghost, for which we know not what to demand as

we ought; but the sense of the evil pressing on the heart is wrought by the Holy Ghost, and, in our weakness through this poor body, the mind of the Spirit is there through the Spirit's working.

Thus He who searches the hearts, and scrutinises what is found there, finds, not our poor selfish feelings or complaints, but the mind of the Spirit—what the Holy Ghost has produced in them; for the Holy Ghost Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. He makes intercession for the saints according to God. Wonderful privilege in our sorrows and sufferings, that, when God searches the heart, He finds the mind formed by the Spirit there, the Spirit itself, as in us, making intercession for us according to God! It is a privilege to be in suffering thus, God by His Spirit taking part in it. As Christ personally felt all the sorrow perfectly through which He passed, so we through grace by the Spirit take our part in it (not according to selfishness, but) according to God, with the increased sense of our infirmity and weakness of our dependence and connection with a fallen creation from which we cannot escape down here, and feeling it so much the more as we see the glory, but given by the power of the Spirit to take part in it according to God—to be its voice, so to speak, in grace felt by ourselves, though having part in it. It is the mind of the Spirit in it which God finds in us when He searches the hearts, and the Holy Ghost Himself is there making intercession for the saints according to God. It is wonderful grace: the heart of man is searched; the mind of the Spirit is there, because the Holy Ghost Himself is there interceding, but, though Himself, in groans which are in our hearts. But (for such is the force of it), though we do not know

“what to pray for as we ought,” we do “know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” God works of and from Himself in our favour—and makes everything work together for our good. We know not what to look for. Perhaps in the present state of things there is no remedy, no direct setting aside or remedy for what makes us groan; but this is certain—God makes all things work together for good to those who love Him. The sorrow may not be remedied, but the sorrow is blessed. We are called according to God’s purpose, and God orders everything for our good.

This evidently brings in God working for us (without us — not in us); and this is the third part of the chapter. The work in us we have seen, in life by the Spirit, and the presence of the Spirit giving us the consciousness of being sons, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ, and helping us—taking part in the scene of the infirmities and sorrow—being come down from heaven to dwell in us while we are in the midst of and, as to our bodies, connected with, the fallen creation, subject to corruption through the first Adam. The will is right; power is there by the Spirit for the inner man, and hope of the glory to come; and that just makes us feel the infirmity and sorrow, but felt through the Holy Ghost according to God. It is a blessed place, and shews how true and complete is the deliverance from the power and evil of the flesh; for in that, in which by the body we are connected with the fallen creation, the will is not— “not willingly,” though we be still subject to the effect as sorrow. As for the will of the flesh, it is dead and condemned; but, on the contrary, He who searches the hearts finds the mind of the Spirit—a divine sense of the evil, and sorrow through it; the Holy Ghost interceding

for us, in that which is beyond the measure of human thought, but God entering, as in our hearts, into the sorrow. It is a wonderful deliverance in, though not yet out of, the sorrow.

We have now brought to us the counsel and favour of God— His own purpose. If through grace any have loved God, they were called according to His purpose. The purpose is not here, nor indeed anywhere, simply sovereignty in election. It includes that to which they were called. They were foreknown; but whom he foreknew He predestinated to a glory which was in His mind and counsels before the world began, namely, to "be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

Here we may remark the epistle goes wholly beyond and out of its general subject—the responsibility of man and his failure, and the way that it is met by the death of Christ. But the delight of divine wisdom was in the sons of men before the world was. Hence the Son became a man that His redeemed ones might be conformed to Him in glory. Meanwhile the first Adam was set in responsibility, and this had to be met, and was met in the cross, but therein a righteous ground laid also for the accomplishing the counsels of God, which consequently was then revealed. See Titus 1:2, 3; 2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 16:25, 26. Compare Eph. 3 and Col. 1. In the Romans, however, the instruction does not go beyond the individual, even in speaking of the purpose of God. We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son, that He may be the firstborn among many brethren. This surely is clearly sovereign grace. To set poor worms, and dying worms, in the same glory as the Son of the Father has nothing to do with responsibility,

or meeting it; although the act by which our failure in it was met did lay the ground for it, in that Man perfectly glorified God; and hence Man is set in God's glory. Our sins and our sin were met on the cross, as we have seen. But besides that God was glorified; and man, exalted to His right hand, entered into the glory as our forerunner. For, besides His personal and eternal tide, it is because of what He did for us that Christ is entered into the glory. Here then we pass beyond responsibility and get on purpose: only that in this epistle we do not go farther than the individual place. We are to be conformed to the image of God's Son. And so scripture constantly testifies. "We have borne the image of the earthy," says 1 Corinthians 15, and "we shall bear the image of the heavenly Adam." "When he shall appear, we shall be like him," says the apostle John; 1 John 3. "He will change our body of humiliation, and fashion it like his glorious body," says our apostle; Phil. 3. Such as to this point is the wondrous counsel of God. For how, as to state, could we conceive anything more glorious, more blessed, than to be conformed to the image of God's Son; to see Him as He is, and be like Him?

The Spirit then blessedly states the security of those whom God has predestinated to be so conformed, stating the steps by which they are brought to the great result, only omitting wholly the work in us, which had been fully stated previously, because He is speaking of that which God is for us in His own purpose as its source (and securing that purpose in grace up to its accomplishment), and not of man's responsibility and the necessary requirement of God's nature and righteousness. These have been discussed in the previous part, both as to guilt and righteousness, and as

to nature and state, so as to render it possible to have to say to the holy God. Grace has wrought that, but has wrought what was needed that we might be reconciled to God. Here (as already stated), alone in Romans, he touches on purpose and counsels. So in Ephesians 1:4. There it is so according to the purpose of His own will. Men must be holy and in love to be before Him; but making us sons is according to the purpose of His own will. He might have made us something lower—could not, indeed, if we think of Him. It was part of His perfection to think and purpose thus. But we can think as a fact of a lower place. But His counsel was to make us sons, "that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us by Christ Jesus." Part of His glory—of what angels learn —would have been lost else; part of the glorious offering of the atonement. This could not be. Well, He called them, justified them, and brought all to perfection in His plan—He glorified them. It is not as yet in historical accomplishment, but all one unbroken chain with God.

We have then the great and blessed truth derived from it all—God is "for us": if so, "who shall be against us?" It is the great central truth of grace: God is for us. He is for us, in giving, in justifying, and in securing that in all difficulties nothing shall separate us from His love. And first, in giving, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us": with Him given, we can reckon on receiving everything else. No gift like this: how should He then not give everything else? Again, it is God Himself who justifies. It is not here justified before Him, but He justifies us Himself— little matter who condemns us then. God is for us in this also. Compare Zechariah 3.

Further, there are difficulties, trials, dangers in the way, death, the high and holy place so far removed, Satan's power against us. First, as to difficulties and trials, we more than conquer. It is the very path of blessing and honour: there Christ trod; there His power and mind are with us. Take all on high moreover, or in the depth: angels and powers, all are creatures—creature power or creature weakness. They cannot separate us from the love of God: this is more, more sure, more strong than any creature; yet it is in Him who, as Man, has met for us all of hostile power and death in the way, and is on high for us. It is the love of God, the sureness of divine love, and that in Christ Jesus our Lord, who has been through all, and is now on high for us. This secures us against all and through all for glory.

Here alone in this epistle, to bring in His intercession, the ascension is spoken of: "It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." He has gone down to the depth for us in sorrow and the ruin of man, and risen in power and victory over it now as the exalted Man; He is interested in us, intercedes for us, finding needed help and mercy: what then shall separate us from His love? Here it is the love of Christ, that we may know Him and His love, as Man gone down to depth, and gone up on high as Man, still interested in and caring for us. In verse 39 it is the love of God in Christ, that we may know the love to be divine, supreme, and immutable, above everything that might separate in us— stronger than everything which, without us, might seek to separate us from this love.

This closes the doctrine of the epistle, carrying us on personally to glory, according to God's counsels, but not

beyond our personal place according to those counsels; and surely it is high and blessed enough. Otherwise the epistle goes no farther than the responsibility of man, of which the law is the perfect rule, and where even redemption and the Spirit (our being dead to sin, and alive through Christ to God) have set us free; it is still "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us who walk after the Spirit." It is being thus dead and alive in Christ which is the way of deliverance. But no one can read chapter 6:14, and chapter 7, without seeing that the great object of the apostle is to shew that being taken wholly from under the law and put under Christ— being delivered from the law—is the way of godliness as well as of peace; that the law, which gave no new life and left sin its power—left us therefore under its power, is contrasted with our having died, for faith, to sin, and with being alive through Christ and the power of the Spirit. That is, obligation, sin, and no new life, which is our state under law, is contrasted with life and the Spirit (having died to sin), giving us power and liberty, though the flesh remains just the same when the mind is renewed, and man is viewed as living still in this earth, only in the life of Christ, and dead to sin.

But in one case we, even if renewed, are still under the power of, and slaves to, sin; in the other, we are set free to live to God. Law is bondage to sin; our new place is life and liberty, sin in the flesh being condemned in the cross. The natures are the same; but to be bound by the evil one and unable to deliver ourselves is a different thing from being set free by power and able to keep it under. But this we have through the very fact that this epistle confines itself to the responsibility of man and the way God has met it in grace, man's justification and

deliverance, with only just a slight mention of counsels at the end to bring in his security.

Thus the whole ground of his personal standing as so justified (God's salvation), is with wonderful fulness completely set forth, searched into, and grounded on God's work of grace, from the utter sinfulness of man alienated from God to the perfect security of the called one, so that nothing can separate him from God's love. This is of unspeakable value. Sin is fully stated, searched out; the law, as condemning and convicting of sin, forgiveness, justification, deliverance from the power of sin, all gone into; every question examined relating to how a man can be just with God; divine judgment, and human experience, fully ventilated; and divine righteousness, through grace, effectually established as the ground on which the believer stands, and which he will never be off. It does not go far on into counsels and privileges connected with the establishment of Christ's glory as Head; but our standing is most completely revealed and gone into, in the Holy Ghost's reasoning, by the word of God.

The three following chapters are a special appendix, for the purpose of reconciling the doctrine that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile with the faithfulness of God to the promises made to the Jew, or Israel. The Jew might say, "I have nothing to answer to your plea against me by the law. I did break it, and hence must give up my claim under it to be a favoured people. But there were promises even before the law, and not with a legal condition. How do you set these aside, so as to make no difference between Jew and Gentile? "This had a colour of reason, and the Spirit of God, jealous of God's faithfulness, and of the sureness of the promise

made to His people, now fully clears up this point, shewing, and that triumphantly, how Israel had forfeited it altogether, and yet that God, faithful to Himself, would accomplish these promises all the same; only that thus, in His divine wisdom, the Jew would have to come in as a mere sinner, entitled to nothing, just as a Gentile would.

But the apostle was charged by the Jews with indifference to Jewish privileges. Against this he eagerly defends himself. He had, he declares (the Holy Ghost bearing witness to him in his conscience), as much love as Moses when he wished himself blotted out of God's book if they were not forgiven. He too, had22 (as beside himself in zeal for them) wished himself accursed from Christ for their sakes, and thus recognises all privileges as theirs. As the Lord, in the parable of the prodigal son, speaks of the elder brother, "All that I have is thine," so all, even Christ Himself, according to the flesh, came of them. Nor had the word of God none effect, but all were not Israel that were of Israel. And now the apostle brings in the sovereignty of God.

And here I may remark, it is not national election, but precisely the opposite; the sovereignty of God setting aside national election, which was the ground the law took. The Jews claimed that, and the apostle is setting it aside, and he does it thus, You claim to be children—exclusively children of promise, as Abraham's natural seed: but it is written, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." You must let in the Ishmaelites, if you take it as a descendant according to the flesh. The Jew would answer, "Ah, that was a slave—not a true child of promise." Still it shewed that the children according to the flesh are not the children of God, but the children of

promise; for this word is of promise (so we should read it): “At this time will I come, and Sarah shall bear a son.” Nor is this all; when Rebecca had conceived by one, Isaac (here there could be no subterfuge as to a slave), before the children were born and had done good or bad, it was said the elder shall serve the younger. If it be title according to fleshly descent, you must let in the Edomites. If the Jew did not consent to this, he must consent to sovereignty in election.

This sovereignty (v. 24) God would use in favour of Gentiles as of Jews. But the apostle treats some other points and objections before arriving there. Verse 14, we have the common objection suggested, there is unrighteousness with God. The apostle then quotes Moses in reply, affirming that sovereignty, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” This was sovereign, but it was sovereign mercy. And when we examine this and the following case, in both we find the wickedness there. For sovereignty in mercy and compassion supposes the evil, and pardoning was not as to good. But when we examine the case, this will appear more strongly still. When the passage quoted from Moses was spoken, Israel had made the golden calf, and God had threatened all with excision, and on Moses’s intercession retreats into His own sovereignty to spare any. Had He not been sovereign, had He acted in righteousness, all (save Moses and Joshua) would have been cut off. But He was sovereign, and could use mercy, and He did. The apostle draws the general conclusion. It is not willing or running on man’s side, but God that shews mercy. No righteousness was

attained by man's willing or running, but by God shewing mercy when man was unrighteous.

So on the other side, in the case of Pharaoh, God was shewing His power and making His name known, and Pharaoh is set up as one in whom it is to be done. He was already a wicked man who defied Jehovah: "Who is Jehovah that I should obey him? I know not Jehovah." Well, says Jehovah, you shall know, and all the earth too; and hardens him, that he may be a monument of His judgments to those that defied His power. Both were wicked—Israel and Pharaoh. Righteousness would have condemned both. He has mercy on one, and hardens the other. He has mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardens, where simple righteousness would simply have condemned both. This is sovereignty. He proves Himself not merely righteous (the day of judgment will prove that), but proves Himself God; and this is of all importance for us all: without it none would be saved.

But then there is still the human objection, which the apostle clearly states, and looks man in the face, "Why then doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" Here it is not simply righteousness, but power exercised according to His will. It is the objection of man, referred to the impossibility of resisting. The sovereign exercise of God's will is no answer really on man's part to the guilt of the exercise of his own. But man does so because, if God does what He pleases, man pleads it as an excuse: it rests with God, and why blame man? But the apostle does not reason on the unreasonableness of it, but, as is most fitting, puts God in His place, and man in his. The thing formed is not to say to Him that formed it, "Why hast thou made me

thus?" God, as the potter, can of one lump make a vessel to honour and another to dishonour. If He does, none can say, What doest Thou? There is no word that He has done so; but the first of all righteousness is that God should have His place, and this the apostle asserts. This is the first point— God will judge man. It is not for man to judge God. God is sovereign. No word that He does make a vessel to dishonour; but if He did, man could only bow.

Then see the holy wisdom of God. He has power to do what He sees good. "What if God, willing to shew his wrath and make his power known, endured the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy"— on the vessels "which he had afore prepared unto glory?" First, man is not to reply to God. He has power, if He saw good, to make vessels to honour and dishonour of the same lump. Then the case is put without weakening that. What if He endured vessels fitted for destruction? not which He had fitted, but, like Pharaoh, shewing His wrath on these already such; and then make known the riches of His glory on vessels of mercy. And now the work on them was His doing, which He had afore prepared for glory. They were vessels of mercy, and He prepared them for glory itself. So with us who have believed through grace. The others were vessels of wrath, and in them (fitted for destruction) He displayed His wrath and made His power known, as in Pharaoh. All were evil to begin with. He displayed His divine title and ways in both mercy and glory. He is sovereign in Himself, preparing for glory "even us," says the apostle, "whom he hath called of Jews and Gentiles." He forces the Jew to admit the sovereignty, or he must

admit Ishmaelites and Edomites, and have been cut off himself—all but Moses and Joshua; and then shews He uses this sovereignty to call Gentiles, who had no title by promise, and Jews, who had forfeited it. He then quotes Hosea, stating both: the Gentiles, chapter 1; the Jews, when rejected, chapter 2;23 and then Esaias's testimony, that only a remnant of Israel would be saved; and but for a very small one they would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah. What is the result? Gentiles, not looking for righteousness, have found it—the righteousness of faith; and Israel, following after the law of righteousness, did not attain to it, seeking it by works of law, not by faith. For they stumbled at the stumbling-stone which Isaiah had declared would be laid in Zion—a sanctuary indeed, but a stumbling-stone; but it would be by faith that they would have the blessing. He that believed should not be ashamed; but, as a body, they had stumbled at the stumbling-stone.

But this must be more fully developed. For we have now, not the sovereignty of God letting in the Gentile and sparing a remnant of Jews through mercy, but Israel's rejection, as to the mass, as a nation, and the question whether it was final. The desire of the apostle's heart was for the salvation of Israel. He testifies of their zeal towards God, only it was not according to knowledge; and this last statement he now develops to explain their casting away. The next chapter treats the question whether it is final or not. They were ignorant of God's righteousness (his great theme in the epistle), and, setting about to establish their own under the law, had not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. That was Christ, and Christ was the end of the law—closed it wholly for righteousness to every one that

believed. The schoolmaster went on in his office up to faith for those who had been put under his care till the time appointed of the Father, and so practically and usefully too for many a soul (for most Christians are under law). Then came the Son, and the whole economy and dispensation of the law closed. So it was in dispensation —they could not have two husbands at once; and so it is in conscience, for such is the mind and truth of God. It is another ground and way of righteousness. One is by our doing; the other God's righteousness—ours by faith in Christ who has perfectly glorified Him. Christ closes the claims of God against us by law, which is condemnation and death; and He is Himself our righteousness who believe through grace.

But here the special point is, He is the end of law. It is done with for righteousness: Christ takes its place. The law knows nothing but the person who is under it fulfilling it. It says, he that doeth these things shall live in them; and this is most righteous. The righteousness which is by faith speaks wholly differently. It is, "If thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved"; for the real question is the salvation of the sinner, not the keeping of law to live. The allusion is to Deuteronomy 30, where the question of responsibility was closed as to keeping the law; and, the people being in captivity for their sins, the keeping of it to live was wholly over, they being cast out for not doing so.

The apostle introduces Christ as the hope then, as indeed He was to the Jew: only through Him could the law be written in the heart according to the new covenant, even in Jewish hopes; and then he turns to the

proof of Christ being the one whom Israel was thus taught to look to; but then it let in the believing Gentile: “Whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed.” Wherever the word was in the heart and in the mouth, that is, the word of faith preached; for law was over, and faith was not law—it was another way of righteousness. Law spoke one way, faith another. We have then, on the statement of the principle which let in the Gentile, the no-difference doctrine coming out beautifully in contrast with the first use of it. First, we had, “there is no difference: for all have sinned”; here, “no difference, for the same Lord is rich unto all that call on him.” “For whosoever [how the apostle glories in these “whosoevers”!] shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved”—consequently a Gentile who did.

The original immediate application was deliverance in Zion for a remnant; Joel 2:32. But God had furnished the blessing in terms which let in the Gentile too when the time was come, and this way of grace of His was more important far than the Jewish privilege. This supposed the testimony which made known the Lord on whom they were to call.

This brings in the relative position of Jew and Gentile under it. The testimony in grace proclaimed to Israel was a clear doctrine of the Old Testament, for which he quotes Isaiah 52:7. But they had not all obeyed the testimony. So Isaiah declares in chapter 53:1: “Who hath believed our report?” So faith comes by this report; that is, the testimony heard— and that by God’s word. But were the Gentiles not the object of God’s testimony? Has the testimony not been sent? God’s testimony was meant for the Gentiles. It is gone out into all the world. The main object here I believe to be to shew that, in God’s

mind, testimony (God's testimony) was to go out to the whole world—not how it was done. But was Israel unaware of this bringing in of the Gentiles? The ancient testimony of Deuteronomy 32 proved the contrary. When Israel first was established as a nation before God, Moses foretold their departure from Him as a foolish and unwise people. They were to be provoked to anger by those that were no people. But Isaiah is very bold. God was found of them that sought Him not (the Gentiles); made manifest to them that asked not after Him (again the Gentiles); but to Israel, "All the day long have I stretched out my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people." Grace had not been wanting, but there was no response. God had called in vain; the divorce had come. See Isaiah 50.

Was the rejection then of Israel final? Surely not. The apostle then gives three proofs that it was not final rejection: a remnant was owned now; the reception of the Gentiles, to provoke the Jews to jealousy, not therefore to reject them; and, finally, the testimony that the Redeemer would yet come to Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob, and so Israel be saved as a whole— "all Israel"—not merely the Jew, nor yet as a remnant. With this the like responsibility of the Gentile is revealed. First, then (as himself of Israel according to the flesh, and blessed), he declares God has not cast away Israel; but as in the days of Elijah, when he even pleaded against them as wholly adversaries to God and His prophet, a remnant according to the election by grace had been preserved, so now, of which he, Paul, was a proof. But "if by grace, not by works, otherwise grace was no more grace." Israel had not obtained what they sought amiss, but the election had obtained it, and

the rest were blinded. And so it was written, as Moses testifies (Deut. 29:4), and David, in spirit, in judgment on their rejection of Christ (Psalm 69:22, 23)—from the close of their history in the wilderness dealt with in patience till Messiah was rejected; and they now stumbled at the stumbling-stone and were blinded. But was it that they might fall? Was this God's purpose about them? Nay, but their fall was the occasion of salvation to the Gentiles to provoke them to jealousy.

This is the second proof it was no final purpose to cast them off. It was ordered to provoke them to jealousy, that is, not to cast them off. And so the apostle laboured. His service to the Gentiles he magnified as tending to this; so far was he from thinking little of Israel. For if their casting away was the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their restoration and fulness? This leads the apostle to bring out the relative position of Jew and Gentile as to the place of promise in this world—a most important point, and bringing out the real position of the Gentile professing body in this world; and into this I must enter a little.

When, after the flood, men had (casting off God) set up to make themselves a name, that they might not be scattered, God scattered them in judgment and formed them into nations. They gave themselves to idolatry, and God called Abraham (Josh. 24)—when they were in this state—and made him the root of a separate family in which the promises were according to the flesh, or in Christ in a special way by grace. Up to that there had been, for good, no head of a race or family. For Adam was the father of sinners; Abraham, of the seed of God in the world. In him election, promise, and calling were thus established—not merely individually in grace, but

as a root and tree of promises. He was the first-fruit, the root. The natural tree was Israel. Some of the branches, for he will say no more, were broken off. It is looked at as a continuing tree of promise, and Gentiles by grace grafted in in their place, to partake with them of the root and fatness of the olive tree. We have not here Jew and Gentile brought into one new man—one body in Christ; not a body united to Christ in heaven, where there is neither Jew nor Gentile; nor a mystery hidden from ages and generations, but Israel, the olive tree of promise, subsisting from Abraham, in possession of the promise, and now some broken off from the place where they were because of unbelief. The root remained in the same tree where they were, and Gentiles were grafted in among them; for they were not natural branches, but only had their standing by faith.

The Gentiles were not to be high-minded, but fear. God had not spared the natural branches; what of the Gentile, who was only grafted in? It is not the church as the body of Christ. There is no breaking off there. Then the Gentile is fully warned, and shewn the principle of God's dealings— the goodness and severity of God on them which fell, the Israelitish branches cut off; "In thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness." Otherwise the Gentile branches would be broken off, as the Jewish. Have they so continued? Has Gentile profession continued in the faith and walk once delivered to the saints? If not, it will be cut off, as the Jews were—solemn word and warning to Christendom.

But the tree of promise remains, and the Jewish branches will be grafted in again into their own olive tree—the original place of Abrahamic promise, "for God is able to graft them in again." Not again into the

church; for, so far from being there, they were broken off when it was founded (as touching the gospel, enemies, to let in the Gentiles); but still, for the fathers' sake, loved as a people chosen of God, elect ones—enemies as touching the gospel; that is, Jews (God's chosen people as such), but broken off for unbelief, as the Gentiles in similar case would be, and the Jews grafted in again. The Jewish system closed, we know, to let in the Gentiles. The Gentile will close, to let in the Jews back as such to the place of promise, which will then indeed extend, in its own way, over the earth. Not that there was any failure, nor could be, as to God's accomplishing His own work of grace; but blindness in part had happened to Israel till the fulness of the Gentiles had come in, all the Gentiles who had part in Christ's glory—the true church, in a word—what completed the number thus brought in by the gospel.

Then the Gentile history of grace and the church would cease, and Israel be saved as Israel, as a nation (which of course cannot be while the church time is going on, where there is neither Jew nor Greek); and not only the Jews but all Israel; when Christ should come, the Deliverer, out of Zion—not from heaven to take to heaven, but turning away ungodliness from Jacob in the place of His power on the earth. The Gentile professing system will be cut off, unless popery and infidelity be continuing in God's goodness. And, note here, it is not God's goodness continuing. Only just then it is displayed in the fullest way; the fulness of the Gentiles will be come in, and taken up then to heavenly glory. But as a system on earth, they will not have continued in God's goodness, and, as such, they will be cut off. These are the ways of God on the earth, not the security of the

saints for heaven. There is a place of promise and blessing into which men are introduced; and they outwardly partake of what can be participated in on earth, but are not necessarily really partakers of Christ; Hebrews 6.

God's covenant to take away Israel's sins is sure. It shall be accomplished when Christ comes; for, note, the apostle speaks of Christ in Zion in a time yet to come; for God's gifts and calling suffer no change or setting aside, and Israel is His, by gift and calling, as a people. "As touching the gospel, they are enemies"; the now rejected nation; but, as touching election, ever and unchangeably loved as a people, and that in connection, not with law, but with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The law was conditionally blessing: "If ye will obey my voice, … ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me." With Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, it was purpose, and unconditional gift and calling. This difference runs through scripture. Daniel 9 refers to Moses; in Leviticus 26:42, it is Jacob and Abraham; so in Exodus 32:13; and in many other places. The final restoration of Israel will be on the ground of the promises made to the fathers, "for his mercy endureth for ever."

But there was a display of God's wisdom in this, which the apostle does not forget. Israel had promises. If they had come in on the ground of these, it would be so far a right, though grace had originally given them. But they would not, but rejected Christ, in whom all is to be fulfilled, and thus they became a mere object of mercy, like Gentiles, though God was faithful to fulfil them. As the Gentiles had been unbelieving, and mercy had been the only ground of their entering in, so now the Jews had not believed in the mercy shewn to the Gentiles, had

rejected the grace that let them in, and were mere objects of sovereign mercy themselves.

It will be seen that I translate Romans n:31 differently from the Authorised Version;24 but I am satisfied it is the only true way. As it stands in English, it directly contradicts verse 28. They are not saved by the mercy to the Gentiles, if they are enemies as concerning the gospel for the Gentiles' sake. God had concluded all in unbelief, that it might be pure mercy to all. It is this that calls out the adoring praise of the apostle in contemplating the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. Thus he closes his survey by the Spirit of the redeeming and justifying grace which had dealt with sinners, and of that wisdom which had known how to conciliate this faithfulness to His promises, on the part of God, with those who were heirs of the promise coming under mere mercy, as behoved a sinner and the riches of God's grace. He now, though briefly summing up his doctrine farther on, turns to the practical consequences which should flow from these mercies of God.

The practical exhortation takes the ground of the whole doctrine of the epistle, with which indeed the last special part as to the Jews closes withal—mercy on all, Jew or Gentile. There was no other ground of hope, and this mercy had been fully developed in the doctrinal part. The first general principle refers directly to the doctrine of chapter 6. We have seen that the first part, closing at chapter 5:11, gives neither experience nor practice. It is just the full mercies of God in redemption. Then, set free, and in the new power of the Spirit of life, we present the body having no will (an instrument I dispose of), a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God,

which is my intelligent service. I am not innocent, I am not under the dominion of sin, and I have the privilege in the free power of life to give up my body as a sacrifice wholly to God, but in living service. It is consecrated to Him, set apart, and acceptable. The intelligent soul knows what it is doing in this. It is not a blind ceremony, done according to rule, nor a legal obligation, a yoke "neither we nor our fathers were able to bear"; but the free service of a willing mind, offering with intelligence all its powers to God, and in particular that body which (if it governed us—had a will of its own) would be the seat and power of sin bringing us into captivity, but is now a living sacrifice to God, and an acceptable one.

This answers perfectly to the practical point of the epistle, while in Ephesians the Christian is seen as having been dead in sins, and a new creation as directly coming from God. Hence the Christian walk is seen as following God in love, and being light in the Lord. The epistle to the Romans does not reach that ground. It has seen the body as the practical seat of sin, and as such called flesh, and brought in death. We are to reckon ourselves dead; but then (being alive to God in Christ, free from the law of sin and death, through the power of grace) we can yield ourselves to God as those that are alive from the dead—present our bodies a living sacrifice to God. It is the purpose and divinely wrought will, the intelligent service of the free Christian, who has to view his dealing with the body as a sacrifice to God though a living one.

The next point is that, the world around us being all astray from God, an immense system built up by the enemy, we cannot as Christians be conformed to it; only it is not a mere outward discordance, but a difference

flowing from an inward renewing of the mind. Hence it goes much farther, having its positive side. The Christian seeks through this world the path of God's will—that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Not acceptable to us, as sometimes said, but in itself, acceptable to God Himself, that is, in its very nature acceptable to every one that judged rightly. This is a great privilege, to have a will of God in a world departed from Him. Christ has marked it and revealed it, in walking with divine perfectness as Man in a way of which His walk was the perfection and the pattern. It was not mutual righteousness, for all were against Him, and went their own way; it was not, I need not say, wrong. It was a heavenly way on the earth, a life of perfect obedience; but a life of grace on the earth—God manifest in the flesh. There needed no way in paradise, but to remain where and what man was.

Where the whole system was departure from God, when man had left Him, there was no right way in it, none but to return to God; but back again—this was impossible. Innocence was over, never to be recovered; the tree of life was lost. The Son of God could bring down heavenly motives on earth, and live a life of grace and separation from all evil in the midst of all the evil in the world, holy and obedient, displaying a new and divine character on the earth, heavenly in its nature, yet adapted in grace to man, such as He was on the earth. This way we have to learn, to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God—that will Christ came to do, and in which He has walked in the midst of evil; a way not only right, but of obedience; God fully restored to His place, and man to his as a perfect one, of grace (that is, above the evil, but suited in goodness to those in it) not only to

seek and save, but in our own demeanour so as to represent God. Here, however, it is represented in its character of God's will. It is the obedience of one who has yielded himself to God, and now seeks what His will is, knowing it is perfect, and delighting in it, in itself, and as obedience.

This self-sacrificing subjection to the will of God hinders our setting up self, and that by its very nature; and the mind takes quietly its place where God has set it. This it does with more firmness, because one does it as serving God. He quietly serves there, where God has set him, and made it a duty. What he does in faith, he does with God in service. And each takes his place in the one body as God has set him, confines himself to its own service, and waits upon it—one body in Christ, and all members one of another. Here alone we find the body in the epistle. Christian position is assumed in various respects. We are in Christ, we are members of His body; the developed doctrine of the epistle enters into none of this. The point of exhortation is not going beyond the gift given by grace, but serving in it.

But the apostle passes on to more general service, as giving, unfeigned love, and then many other points in Christian life. But all this part of his exhortation refers to personal qualities or characters, and state—the spirit in which we are to walk. If a man give, it should be with freedom of heart; his love is to be unfeigned, abhorring evil and cleaving to good, kindly affections, brotherly love, and putting others before oneself. Grace and generosity of heart should in general characterise the Christian; sympathy with others; not heeding the fashion of the world or high things, but associating25 with those of low estate (it is not "condescending"); walking so as

to have things irreproachable before men, and, as far it depends on oneself, walking in peace with all; in nothing overcome of evil, but overcoming evil with good—a noble, indeed divine, principle. I am myself by grace in spite of the evil of others, I do not avenge self, I am above the evil of others, as God is, in principle doing good to those who hate us. All this is personally characteristic—the spirit in which we walk.

Chapter 13 turns to relative duties, with the addition of the Lord's near coming. Two principles are presented thus in the chapter: duty, to which he exhorts as the principle of love with which they were imbued in Christ; and that the night was far spent, the day at hand. First, he exhorts to subjection to the civil authority. These are God's ordinances: the powers that exist are ordained of Him—a precious direction, sparing us all question of who has the right, and political partisanship. "The powers that be"! that is all I have to concern myself about. There is no power but of God. Where power therefore is, it must be of God; and I own Him in it. Wherever power is established, the Christian obeys. Resisting it is resisting God's ordinance. They are God's ministers to maintain order. On the same principle we pay tribute. From this the apostle passes to every one's due, tribute, custom, honour. The Christian pays it, owing no man anything, save one debt that always remains; and this it is which fulfils the law, for love to our neighbour will work him no ill. The principle of love makes good the requirements of law, which the law itself could never make good. This is the first great principle.

Then the thought of the Lord's coming is used to enforce all: "It is high time to awake out of sleep; for our salvation is nearer than when we believed." The night of

this world is the absence of the Sun of Righteousness. Let us clearly conceive this. In the busy and pleasure-seeking course of this world, for him who has understanding, and to whom Christ is known, it is still night; the gloom of night is over it, but the day has dawned to his faith, the Morning Star is arisen in his heart, but the world is asleep in the still-continuing darkness of night. For us indeed the night is far spent, but the world is asleep in the night. The waking soul sees in the horizon the Morning Star, the dawn along its edge, and waits for day. The heart is in the day, and walks as in the day. As Christians, we have done with works of darkness. In conflict we are still; but our armour against evil, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, is the light in which we walk. The power of light, and truth, and godliness, and judgment of evil, which belongs to that day, is in our heart, and the weapons and snares of darkness are foiled and detected, getting no entrance into, no hold on, the soul. We walk honestly as in the day, we put on in our ways and heart the walk and character of Him who is the true light of it, the Lord Jesus Christ. Having the hope of being like Him there, we purify ourselves as He is pure, we walk as He walked. We do not provide for the lusts of the nature which belongs to the darkness to satisfy it, but walk as Christ walked. Such is the Christian in view of Christ's coming and bringing on this dark and benighted world the light and day of God, in His effectual power; and such are the two springs and characters of Christian conduct; recognition of, acting up to, every relative duty in love; and knowing the time, the near approach of day to which he belongs. Compare 1 Thess. 5. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand."

The apostle now in chapter 14, turns to special cases of the spirit in which Christians should walk in their relationships with one another. There were those weak in faith, not living fully in the light and power of the new creation as dead with Christ to the rudiments of the world. It was weakness of faith, but Christ was loved; they were the purchase of Christ's precious blood. Christ had died for them. They were to walk in grace, receiving the weak, but not to doubtful questions which might bewilder his faith. And as to that, wherever he was weak (meats, days, etc.), as a Jew might well be, though it be weakness, the weak should not judge the strong as doing evil because his conscience did not allow him to do it, nor the strong despise the weak because he had scruples which a fuller faith would have delivered him from. It was judging another's servant. He stood or fell to his own master, and God was able to make him stand fast, weak as he was. That every one was to be fully persuaded in his own mind, not act on another's faith To Him they must look as the Lord to whom they were responsible, as Him to whom they had to live.

The apostle, as ever, then breaks out as to that which belonged to Christ in this respect. Christ was Lord of dead and living; to this end He died and rose again. Finally, He alone was judge. It was to God every one would give account of himself. All would be before Christ's judgment-seat; every knee bow to Him; "every one of us give an account of himself to God." This, rather, the Christian should judge, not to put a stumbling-block in his brother's way. It is uncharitable to destroy, as far as the bearing of our act goes in leading him to violate his conscience, or drive him back

from Christ, as if Christ made lawless the one for whom He died. He that serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God, and approved of the sound judgment of men. We are to follow what makes for peace, and edifies others. “To the pure all things are pure”; no meats are defiled meats, if the heart is pure; but if a person defiles his conscience, even through an unfounded scruple to him, it is unclean. Happy for him who, in boasting of his liberty by faith, does not go beyond his faith in what he does—does not offend in what he allows himself to do; for whatsoever is not of faith (done with God as that which is allowed with Him) is sin. If a man thought he ought to honour such a day, or abstain from such and such food, and, to shew his liberty, does not, to him it is sin. It is not of faith with God. If a man has faith as to these things, it were better to keep it to himself before God than stumble his brother by acting on it where it does so.

The first seven verses of chapter 15 are a summing up of the same point, and belong to chapter 14. The strong are to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves. So acted Christ. He did not seek to please Himself, bearing in meekness the reproaches that fell on Him, and walking so faithfully, so perfectly with God that, when men were disposed to reproach God, the reproach fell on Christ; so perfectly did He present God in His ways—the image of the invisible God. Christ served others (such should be our path), He did not please Himself; His life, on the contrary, was a life of reproach which He bore, but it was the reproach of God He bore. The quotation of this passage gives occasion to the apostle to justify his use of it by a principle of the utmost importance, that what was written aforetime was

written for our instruction; that walking in patience, perhaps in reproach here, the comfort of the scripture might be ours, that we might know that God's mind was in it, our reproach His reproach, because as serving Him we had our part with Him, and hence have hope and bright confidence of soul in any and every trial in the whole path of faith. For all these things brought the apostle and the right-minded saint into the patience of the gospel; and this is the path of love, serving others, and for Christ's sake. But God is the God of patience (of patience, how great with us all!) and, blessed be His name, of comfort too. What a name to give to God, perpetually bearing with us, with our stupid, ignorant, and often inconsistent hearts, and occupying Himself with all our little trials to comfort us! He consoles those who are cast down, never withdraws His eyes from the righteous, is patient where we are impatient even with Him, and comforts us in grace. So have we to walk, like-minded one toward another, and receiving one another as Christ received us—weak in faith, that we might be to the glory of God. This closes the exhortations of the epistle.

The apostle proceeds to sum up briefly the leading elements of what he had taught, especially the letting in of the nations to the privileges of the gospel. Christ "was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers." The nations, on the other hand, had no such promises; they had to glorify God for His pure mercy. We have already seen how the accomplishment of promise to the Jews has become pure mercy by their rejection of the Christ of promise. The apostle then quotes several passages from the Old Testament, shewing that this mercy to the

nations was always contemplated of God, and that there should be a root of Jesse, and One rising to reign over the nations, in whom the nations should hope. The apostle then thinks of them as such, and says, resting on this word “hope,” “now the God of hope [for the full promises are not fulfilled, and He gives us hope, and we are saved in hope as to that fulness] fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.” Such is the natural condition of the Christian, full of joy and peace in believing; the Holy Ghost dwelling and acting in him so that his spirit rises in abundant hope, trusting in God, and looking forward to the bright and holy and blessed time when all shall be accomplished in the light—when we shall be with Jesus.

Paul then refers to his ministry. He trusted that they were able to edify one another; but he wrote to them as having this ministry to the Gentiles confided to him; ministering the gospel of God, in order to the offering up of the Gentiles as an offering to God, acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Ghost. Thus a divine public ministry was confided to him by Jesus Christ in the things pertaining to God. In this the apostle presents himself figuratively as a priest (such is the force of the word “ministering” the gospel), offering up those of the nations to God; for such are Christians—an offering out of the world to God—a kind of first-fruits of His creatures. So the Levites were offered up, instead of the first-born of Israel. We are consecrated, sanctified to God by the Holy Ghost.

He then shews the power with which he had laboured, and how he had gone, not where Christianity was already planted, but to poor souls far away from God

and light. Now his ministry was closed in these parts. He had accomplished his service; others might build up, but his work was done. He was a master-builder to lay the foundation; resisting indeed energetically the inroads of evil, but even he had his own place, and only that. It was an energy which had a sphere where energy had its place. He could preach, in spite of every danger, where no one had been; he could form, establish, ordain, enter into all details needed for this, and resist evil and false doctrine, so that his building might not be thrown down; and from Jerusalem to Illyricum he had fully preached, completed, or filled up the measure of the gospel work. Christianity was founded, and his work was done. The Greek world was Christianised and settled, as far as true church work went. The Latin world was before him; those who were at Rome also; for his work was done in those parts, and there was no more place for him; there he would be out of his place—ill-placed. A man, even now, may finish his work in a place (the formation and establishing work), and only be in the way if he remains, hindering others, and so felt—an energy not adapted to the quiet care of everyday service, which occupies itself with the details of souls, and would only harass them. It is wise to learn when this is so, and work elsewhere when God calls. At any rate his service in the Grecian sphere of his labour was closed; he had no more place in these parts.

But God would not allow Latin Christianity to have an immediate apostolic foundation. Christians were already at Rome, as we learn from the epistle, and Paul, as we find here, did not go on (when his service was closed on the eastern side of the Adriatic) to pursue them with free apostolic energy in Rome, but goes to Jerusalem

with alms and offerings. The apostle went only as a captive to Rome. Christianity (save those residing there as inhabitants) began as a captive in Rome. He had been long desirous of going there, but even now does not speak of it, though labouring wherever he found himself, as a general rule, at a place which was a direct object of apostolic labours. He did not found the church at Rome — it was already there. He could not say, “where Christ was not named”: it is only, “When I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you; for I trust to see you on my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.” Spain he was going to; he would see them on the way. That Peter had been, or was there, the epistle wholly excludes the idea. Christianity founded itself at Rome. No wise master-builder was there. It is not the custom of God to take worldly capitals as the centre of His work. “Hazor aforetime (we read in Joshua) was the head of all these kings.” It, and it alone, was destroyed of all the cities that stood still in their strength. Paul was going to Spain. He would see them on the way. But as far as scriptural history goes (that is, in God’s representation of the closing scenes of the gospel), he never goes to Spain, is brought a prisoner to Rome after two years’ captivity in Cassarea, remains two years captive in his own house in Rome; and there, with the judgment of the provincial Jews, the history closes. This is a remarkable, and I believe, not unintentional account of the character of Paul’s intended visit to Rome, coupled as it is with the actual history of his imprisonment and arrival there as a prisoner more than two years after. We have his early history in Galatians for doctrinal objects, but no such history of frustrated plans in any other epistle. That was

at Rome only, and recorded by the Holy Ghost—surely not without intention.

But now he went to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. His apostolic ministry was closed in the east; he undertakes a diaconal service to Jerusalem, and never resumed a free apostolic service again, as far as we have any direct historical account. His purpose, as stated in this chapter, he certainly did not fulfil as intended. (See verse 23.) Indeed his fears as to what might happen in Judaea are stated in verses 30-32. I do not enter here on the question, on which so much has been written, whether he was freed from a first captivity in Rome, and again taken prisoner. It depends mainly on inferences from 2 Timothy, compared with Philippians, Philemon, and Acts 20. The direct scriptural account closes at the end of the Acts, supplemented by what we have here (Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon having been written in captivity); to which there must be added Hebrews, if we esteem it to be written or composed by the apostle Paul—chapter 13:23, 24, applying directly to the question. The question affects in no way the moral or ecclesiastical bearing of any of the epistles.

The close of the service of the great apostle, as we have it in scripture, is deeply affecting: made even here so like his Master, though at a distance, as it could not but be; but all failing in this world, and closing, however wonderful—yea divine—the energy in exercise in the work, resulting in failure here, because of the materials with which the divine workman had to deal; yet the ultimate purpose of God only so much the more wonderfully accomplished, the work only so much the more evidently divine, when we consider the materials

wrought on, and the failure as displayed in them. Compare Acts 20:29-33; and still more Isaiah 49:4-6. But the comparison of our chapter (verses 23-33) with the closing chapters in the Acts will bring home to us more than any commentary the true state of the case: only in Acts 19:21 we should read, I have no doubt, “in spirit,” the Greek having the practical force of “his spirit.” Chapter 21:4 must be compared. I would remark that the Jews, who, to please their countrymen, had recommended him to go into the temple, never once appear in the difficulties they had brought him into by it. But the Lord stood by him and strengthened him, and all was ordered of God.

A witness to all the authorities from the Sanhedrim to the Emperor, the providence of God had ordered his path, and the Lord’s grace sustained him in it. If the free service of apostolic power in the Spirit was now to close in an unwilling captivity, yet he is delivered by the Jews to the Gentiles to suffer at their hands, in the perfectness of grace, if not in the perfectness of the blessed Lord Himself. For who is as He was? No highs and lows, as the energy of the apostle could and did experience, but the calmness of unvarying perfection was there, if it were not in the thought of drinking the cup none else could, and that, if it could be, was more perfect than all.

If as yet a stranger at Rome, his heart is at home with many there. No forgetfulness of service to himself, nor of that done to the Lord, marked the apostle’s spirit. His heart, too, for nearly all had an epithet or a remembered service, which went to their heart, and individualised and gave reality to the remembrance. He could not write to them as an assembly he had had to say to, for there

was (chap. 16:5) one there, yet he could write to almost all as saints that he had known. He filled himself in spirit with their company, as those known in their faith and service. And this, under the circumstances, is as beautiful as it is apposite. He was apostle of the nations, and as such had his service at Rome, as elsewhere; but the apostle of the nations had bound by the links of faith, and with a large and individualising heart, one and another and another to the service that he was performing for Christ, and by the heart that performed it. We do service as a whole, so did the apostle—a whole that embraced all the counsels of God; but he did it with a heart that could link up all the elements into the bonds of a charity which thought of each to make them a whole in Christ in love. The fruits will be hereafter. We find many here, remark, who in various ways served diligently in the sphere in which God had placed them; from those who were of note among the apostles, to Phoebe, the deaconess or servant of the church at Cenchrea, who had been a helper of many. None of them are forgotten before God, although their names are not recorded even by the mindful fervency of the apostle's love.

The apostle then judges those who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine they had learned: activity of mind, seeking personal self-importance, working mischief to themselves and others. Such activity separates the heart from God, with whom subjection of spirit is always wrought in us, a confiding learning in the secret consciousness that all is received from God. We see this spirit so sweetly in John the Baptist; and so wherever the Spirit of God works. Its coming from God brings not only knowledge but the love of God into it. It

is no charity to sanction such workings of the human heart. We are to avoid them. And faithfulness in this, in ever such a weak one, brings a testimony from God with it which has power—more power than the pretension of man—and works by the Spirit to preserve the saints wherever the Spirit of God rules in the heart, wherever the soul is subject to God. The rest are made manifest. The hearts of the simple are preserved: the mischievous though fair speeches are judged for them.

This leads to a most beautiful principle for the guidance of our hearts, which Christianity alone can give: “I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.” The wisdom of the world must know its crafts in order to avoid them; but God has a path of His own in the world which wisdom has traced. By His teaching the heart is well informed in what is good—good as to the path which is in this world: Christ’s path, the path of divine goodness and wisdom as to everything around in man. Learning this, I need not know all the evil or any of it. I shall walk in the wise and holy path I know, and need not know the rest. It is avoided and remains unknown, and the heart more conversant with what is good, lovely, and of good report. This is a most healthful and blessed preservative, a path marked out of God for us in this world. It is great grace. If I know the one right path across the waste, I need not learn all that lost themselves in it. “By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.” It was sufficient for the blessed Lord to say, when tempted for us, “Man shall live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” We have the salutations of, as well as to, the saints; for fellowship in love characterises the spirit of the gospel.

We have also what shews us Paul's way of writing his epistles, save that to the Galatians; he dictated them while another wrote. Here one Tertius wrote it, and salutes with the rest. From 2 Thessalonians 3:17 we learn how they were verified, their accuracy secured. For letters which had the character of commandments of the Lord (1 Cor. 4:37) this was important.26 The salutation at the end came from his own hand, which verified all that was in the epistle as his, that is, as of apostolic inspired authority. We see what he thought of his own epistles; the accuracy he thought important, just because they were not his, but from the Lord. The reader may remark the three steps in the reception of divine truth in 1 Corinthians 2:12-14. The things freely given of God are known, revealed by the Spirit, then communicated by words27 which the Spirit taught, and then received through the grace of the Spirit. Compare, as to the two first points, 2 Pet. 1:19-21. So at the end of our epistle.

The apostle closes with ascription of praise to the only wise God; but, in doing so, and owning Him as He who is able to establish them according to His gospel, he recalls the character of the testimony contained in that gospel—that of which he speaks in so many places in so remarkable a manner. In this epistle he has not developed this mystery; his object was to shew how a soul stood in liberty before God; and that is individual, and must be so. Conscience and justification are always necessarily individual. Still he supposes the Christian estate (as in Romans 8: i) that we are in Christ, and (chap. 12) that we are one body in Christ; as here the full scope of the counsels of God in the mystery hidden from ages. None of them is unfolded in the epistle; but

his preaching of Jesus Christ was according to the revelation of the mystery, which set Christ at the head of all things; and not only so but brought Jews and Gentiles as one body, with all distinction lost, into union with Him in heaven as Head—a truth which left the system of the law entirely aside, though confirming its authority in its own place. This had been kept secret since the world began, but was in the counsels of God before the world was (compare 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:2; Eph. 1 and 3; Col. 1), and was revealed now that the foundation for the heavenly and eternal blessing was laid in Christ's work.

But a very important principle is added here; it is not "the scriptures of the prophets" really here, but "prophetic scriptures." Such was this epistle, and Ephesians and Colossians—in a word, all the inspired epistles; and by these this truth was made known to the nations "according to the commandment of the everlasting God." He whose counsels were not confined to Judaism, but who had His own purpose in the Son, and now revealed this to the nations, and commanded it to be sent forth to them; He, who, while He had been in a special manner in time God of the Jews, had His counsels and views in man, and in the Seed of the woman, would accomplish the counsels in power. And now this original purpose of God was made manifest for the obedience of faith to all nations. But the inspired and prophetic character of the scriptures of the New Testament is here distinctly affirmed. The only question is: Since there were such, are those we have in the New Testament they? And outward and inward testimony makes this good to the soul taught of God.

4 There appear to me to have been four sources of idolatry: first, an ineffaceable consciousness of God;

deified ancestors; the stars; and the principle of generation. These were interwoven, the last giving rise to corruption inconceivable, the consecration of degrading lusts. The gods, as popularly known, were deified passions, as Venus, Mars, etc., and the powers of nature. Behind all these was always the unknown God. Conscience had no part in the scheme; natural benevolence might, as in India; nor even when something of conscience (for all have one since the fall) mingled with it, as in the Egyptian Amend, no future intercourse with God, transmigration, exaltation to gods like themselves. But though the root of God-consciousness was always there, fellowship with God was unknown.

5 A promise not to destroy the earth was given to Noah, but he was no root of promised personal blessings.

6 The more we examine the cross, the more we shall find how all good and evil found its issue, and how it connects together the consummated evil of man in hatred against God manifested in Christ in love, the full power of Satan as prince of this world, his hatred against goodness and audacity against the Lord. Then perfection in man in Christ, and love to the Father, and obedience, (and we may thankfully add to us), the double character of love to God as man upward and divinely to us, and all this in the very place of sin where it was needed, Christ being made sin. Then in God perfect righteousness against sin, and perfect love to sinners. All was concentrated in the cross.

7 In the Romans the saint is looked as alone in this world, not risen, but the old man crucified with Christ.

8 Chapter 3 gives, not the counsels and work of God, but Paul's administration of the mystery.

9 We are seen in Christ in chapter 8:1, and the church is contemplated in chapter 12; but this is assumed—the subject is not treated.

10 The quickening together with Christ is exactly the same in the Colossians and the Ephesians, but resurrection is not. In the Colossians the believer is raised with Christ, and by faith of the operation of God who raised Him. In Ephesians it brings in Jew and Gentile so as to be together in Christ in heavenly places.

11 The interpretation "they have all died," as a consequence, I have not the smallest question, is a simple blunder, as indeed verse 15 plainly proves.

12 It is not necessarily His resurrection alone. It is abstract; but this was the first grand complete proof.

13 In this it partakes of the nature of the everlasting gospel.

14 The believer also is always seen alive on earth.

15 Our resurrection with Christ looks at Him as come down in grace into our place where we are dead in sin. Our being then raised together with Him involves union with Him. This is not the subject of Romans, but individual justification. Christ is viewed as risen alone.

16 "Written" agrees with work, not with law; the Greek leaves no question as to this.

17 Another word is used for that, as in Romans 5:13, and in Philemon 18, "put that to my account." Here in Romans 4: (11 times), verses 3 to 24, it is to "esteem, reckon, count." See page 239.

18 Compare 2 Corinthians 3, and Galatians 2:19, 21

19 It is not, “that being dead in which”; as if the law had died. The text has been (in error) changed in one letter in Greek to keep the apparent comparison perfect, to the destruction of the whole doctrine of the passage.

20 Compare the case of the leper, washed, sprinkled with blood, and then anointed.

21 It is of Him, not for Him. Note in verse 1 we are in Christ; here verse 10 He is in us—two things inseparable. One is in a place before God; the other, power of life before the world. It is the practical development of John 14:20.

22 I do not read it as “could wish,” but as “had.” He refers expressly, I believe, to Moses in respect of his love to the people. As to God’s people, I believe if we have Christ’s Spirit, it cannot be otherwise. It is not a sober wish, but the desire of the blessing of God’s people at all costs to self.

23 Peter, speaking only of Jews, quotes only Hosea 2.

24 “So these also have now not believed in your mercy, in order that they also may be objects of mercy.”

25 “Condescension” is a false translation of the Greek.

26 Hence what came from his own experience, however elevated, was distinguished (1 Cor. 7:12).

27 It is not “comparing,” but using a spiritual medium of communication.

Notes Of Readings On 1 Corinthians

Chapter 1.

The first epistle to the Corinthians consists of details more than of great truths, and therefore not so much has been written on it. Sosthenes is associated with Paul, as having laboured there, where he had also been chief ruler of the synagogue; Acts 18. The association of others does not hinder the sole authorship of Paul. So, in addressing the Galatians, he speaks of “all the brethren which are with me,” because he was shewing that the whole church of God was against them.

Verse 2 brings to view the roots of the main question of the church of God, two classes of persons being taken up there. This gives importance to the epistle. “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.” Those that call on the name of the Lord Jesus are professors, assumed to be faithful till they went or were put out, not necessarily the body of Christ but the house of God. The assembly in Corinth, as elsewhere, is recognised as representing the church there. They were not born like the nation of Israel, but saints by call; sanctified in Christ Jesus, not after an external sort merely. The universality of the application is carefully maintained, its divine claim over all Christians everywhere. The direct address is to the Corinthian assembly, but the apostle takes in all the Christian profession elsewhere. He addressed them as saints, and I have no doubt that he considered them truthful, unless they were proved hypocrites. But calling

is professional simply; just as John says that whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him; but of hypocrites this would not be true. Though there might be hypocrites there, they would be characterised as of the church of God at Corinth. It is not what my judgment of individuals may be, but the statement of what their character is in such a place. There may be, and there was, an assembly of God in Corinth; and the apostle treats them as sanctified in Christ Jesus; then the rest as calling on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is a different thing from sanctified in Christ Jesus. Though a man who calls on the name of the Lord, unless he be a hypocrite, is sanctified, yet the calling on the name of the Lord does not give him title as such to be styled “sanctified in Christ Jesus.”

The epistle is addressed to the church of God with all that call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, generally, till chapter 10, to the house of God; after that, to the body specifically. There is a different state of things now. If men take the name of the Lord, they are bound by all that is written to such; but it does not follow that Paul would have written such a letter to them now, nor do I believe he would. He gives meat in due season. He would have to do with what is practically fallen away from the truth, and he would not deal with this as with a body of persons like those gathered in Corinth. As yet we have not the fact that false brethren had crept in. “Sanctified in Christ Jesus “is not the same thing as “sanctified by blood” in Hebrews, but quite different ideas; the latter not necessarily rising beyond external consecration, though, where faith is, it consecrates to God.

In Ephesians 4 the distinction re-appears more definitely, which we have seen in 1 Corinthians already. First, “one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling”; next, “one Lord, one faith, one baptism,” the wider circle of profession; and then the largest of all, “one God and Father of all,” etc., returning to the intimacy of His children “who is in you [or ‘us’] all.” So the apostle, in Acts 17, quotes a Greek poet, “for we are also his offspring.” Compare also Ephesians 3:15, “Every family”; and Adam was thus called son of God. It is not, of course, the spiritual bearing of the name; it is used as here naturally. At the time when the epistle was written, all that bore the Lord’s name were looked at as true believers, unless proved to the contrary. It is wholly different now; and Paul would not have written to them as to the Corinthians, though professors are now bound by what he then wrote, because they make the profession.

We shall find another thing in the epistle: that the consequence of the association in verse 2 is, that the local church has taken the standing of the whole body. It will come out more in chapter 12; but in associating all professors of Christianity with the church at Corinth, he deals with them as they stand, upon the ground of the body of Christ, though only a local assembly.

It is striking to see how the apostle, after the salutation in verse 3, takes up all that he saw to be good, as a testimony to their reality, before he begins to deal with the evil (v. 4-9). “Ye come behind in no gift.” There was gift, but very little grace. “The testimony of Christ was confirmed in you”; “In everything ye are enriched by him in all utterance, and in all knowledge.” They had the truth and power to communicate it. They were waiting

also for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ; not exactly His “coming,” nor more (I think) than that He is hidden as yet. There is nothing about the rapture here, nor the judgment. In Hebrews 10:26 it is the stronger word, meaning complete knowledge, or, as often elsewhere, recognition. Peter, in his second epistle (chap. 1:5-8), uses the two words. A speculative mind might learn all ever so accurately, without faith or renewal.

The testimony is said to be “of Christ” here, “of God” in chapter 2:1; because it is, not another testimony, but another way of looking at the same. Here it is personal to Christ. Christ’s testimony confirmed in you is the testimony of God brought to you. You give a different name to a thing from the different feeling you have about it. In chapter 2:1 he did not bring what was human, because it was the testimony of God; and he determined not to know anything among them but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Words are used, but really with the power of them. He did not come with man’s wisdom and man’s speech to bring God’s testimony; but it was the testimony of Christ all the same. The great thing is to see why he uses a word, not that it is a different thing necessarily, but why that particular word comes in. It is God’s testimony, not man’s.

It is striking, I think, that the apostle addresses them here as “sanctified,” enriched with gift, etc., and also says they shall be confirmed to the end, that they may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ; but then he goes on to blame them for everything. They had got testimony to their place in Christ by the gifts, etc. They had the Holy Ghost in consequence of their faith in Christ, and then he reckons on God’s faithfulness; so

that there is a point of departure from which he can deal with them. Many were to be blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus; how be so blameable now?

Verses 8, 9 are exceedingly important. He had the hope that they were saints in a general way; then he casts them on God's faithfulness; so that they would be blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is one of the blankest cases of the perseverance of the saints (not happily, but commonly so-called); for, at that time they were going on exceedingly ill, yet there he introduces that they would be not safe but blameless. This he connects with the faithfulness of God. Jesus Christ will confirm you to the end, and God is faithful by whom ye were called.

"Fellowship of his Son," which follows just after, means having a part together, and with Christ (koinonia) and in the blessings that are with Him. Partaking (metokee) is not communion (koinonia), which last is a closer thing. I partake of a thing, and in that measure have it in common with another. It is more in the character of communication. For instance in Hebrews 2:14 we have the difference in an important case. "Forasmuch, then, as the children were partakers of [kekoinoneken] flesh and blood [because we all had it, it is all in common], he also himself likewise took part [metesken], of the same." Some misused it to teach that He took sinful flesh, which is nowhere said; but Christ did take flesh and blood. In Luke 5 the two words are used in a general way. "They beckoned to their partners" [metokois], v. 7, while [koinonoi], v. 10, shews they had common share, with nothing very definite for distinction. Words are used sometimes in a less, sometimes in a more, definite sense. We use a great number of words which have

merely a different shade of meaning without an intention of making a difference. You might say, They both live in the same place, or in the same locality, but you do not mean another thought. Locality is the more general term. So going shares or partnership might have a shade of difference.

The first thing we come to is definite: “I beseech you that ye all speak the same thing,” etc. (v. 10-12). Then we have the character of the preaching of the gospel, that what is foolishness to man is what God has taken to put down flesh, the foolishness of preaching, and the shame of the cross to bring everything to nought by it. It is hard to keep steadily before your mind that, if you want to do God’s work, you must have what the world will not have; and it is so, that no flesh should glory in His presence. It pleased God, when in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Otherwise it would have been man’s wisdom, that is, in the power of his mind.

I do not believe that a single thought of God ever enters into man’s mind by intellect. It is always by conscience, not by intellect. There is faith, and there is love; but conscience is the topknot, as you call it. And in that way all the philosophy of man goes at once. The fact is, God is not in His place at all if my mind sets to work to judge about Him. It is when I say, “I am a poor sinner, and I believe in God,” that God has His right place, even if my heart is wrong; still the conscience is that which directly owns the claims of God. There is no knowledge of God in intellect.

Responsibility comes in thus. God is revealed, and the moment there is a revelation, it is revealed that I may receive ideas which my mind of itself cannot take up; but if I have received an idea, I am responsible to be found in the right place by it. If I have the idea that you are my child, I am responsible to act as your father; but the mind is incapable of forming an idea of God, and that is where the philosophers have all gone wrong. They say the mind can form an idea without man's conscience, but it cannot: though it does not follow that God cannot reveal it to him. It is the supposition that the power within us is the measure of all that we can be apprehensive of. This I deny altogether; it is a total mistake. Suppose a poor old woman, and a strong man gives her his arm, that would not be power in her.

If there comes a revelation of God, there is the responsibility to receive it, but it does not follow that my mind could have formed the idea. In these days it is well to be clear as to this. The worst kind of infidelity says, "Man can have no idea beyond his senses, and a few original deductions which he may draw." I reply, All true; but that leaves you as ignorant of God as an animal. Do not pretend that there is nothing outside of yourself, and here comes in revelation. Like the woman in John 4, conscience has to be reached from without: "If thou knewest the gift of God." The woman says in effect, "What of that?" And then how does Christ deal with her? "Go, call thy husband, and come hither," and this arrests her. Real intelligence of God is in the conscience. I do not say the heart may not be drawn.

As to the distinction between "conscience" and "heart," the affections are in the heart, and conscience is my responsibility for right and wrong. You may have natural

feelings moved like the women of Jerusalem beating their breasts because some one was going to be put to death; but what detects the work of God is when these two go together. You may meet with natural conscience alone, which is much like Judas, who went and hanged himself. God is light and love, and if He reveals Himself, you need have both. Where the light comes and deals with the conscience, the love attracts the heart, and both are moved. Thus Peter went to Christ and said, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Why did he go to Christ at all? So I say, “I am a guilty sinner,” when the light comes in; and where the work is of God, it is accompanied by the attraction of love. There may be much of natural feeling which is of no value. Just as in a time of the cholera raging, there is excitement enough in the terror of the moment; but the cholera goes, and all that goes too.

The heart is used for all sorts of feeling. What is described in the prodigal son is that he began to be in want. That proves nothing but that the soul was originally made to be fed. He had not yet come to himself; but the effect of beginning to be in want, when God had not revealed Himself, was that he went farther and farther away. So it is with every man who goes thoroughly into the world until he gets tired of it. Coming to himself may follow a remorse.

The conscience may be reached by Satan. Man commits murder, and it has passed into a proverb, “Murder will out.” That is conscience. Man got it at the fall, and carries it with him. Adam had no knowledge of good and evil, but was subject to God’s authority, and for that reason the thing imposed upon him in the garden was neither good nor evil in itself except by the command.

Now we have the sense of wrong. If a child only six months old slaps his mother, he knows it is wrong. Conscience may be defined as my own mind judging of good and evil as God does. That is why it is such a totally false thing to make it a law. A law is a thing imposed upon a person, whereas the essence of conscience is that I discern between good and evil in myself, and that becomes a law to me. Law is imposed by a lawgiver, as God does. In the garden Adam was going against subjection to God: “thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife.”

As to the difference between wisdom and understanding (v. 19) in English, wisdom is the attempt to use what a man has learnt, but you could hardly call it that in Greek. We may say that the understanding of the prudent is more the character of discernment, whereas wisdom is acquaintance with truth more. In the Hebrew a great many more words are used for wisdom than we have in English. In Isaiah 29 (verse 14 quoted here), the prophet is taking up the case of Christ’s coming. He had taken up Sennacherib and that leads him on, and he launches out into the Assyrian of the last day. That is how the prophets speak, and that is what Peter means by “of no private interpretation.” You cannot take up a few words without the connection. In Isaiah 33 the whole scheme is developed. Verse 20 is a quotation from Isaiah 33:18, which follows, “Thine eye shall see the king in his beauty”: sinners are afraid, and then he says, Where is the wisdom of man? Here they were ‘counting up the towers’ and so on; but to what purpose after all?

The “foolishness of preaching “(v. 21) is more the way of doing it, the means, but it also takes in the thing preached: you cannot separate them here. The “power

of God" (v. 24) is not exactly the same as "kept by the power of God." In the latter it is more absolutely in Himself, and Christ is the one in whom it is all deposited; but when you speak of "Christ the power of God," it is more the means by which it is brought out. In the one case it is "unto salvation "because righteousness of God is revealed in it: there is power of God in it to save us.

The expressions "foolishness of God," and "weakness of God" (v. 27) are used merely to put the thing in the strongest way. For instance, death is weakness: "crucified in weakness"; yet everything of man was set aside by it, and in that sense the weakness of God. It is the setting up of God absolutely. The weakness of God was the gospel, that is, as man would speak of it; and foolishness as man looks at it. And God chose that—took it on purpose, though to man it was merely some one hanging on a gibbet, and yet God was glorified in it. As to "things which are not" (v. 28), out of death is a thing which is not, but the apostle takes it as an extreme case in the whole scene of God in Christendom. God has brought to nought all of heathenism and Judaism.

At the end of our chapter we get the fuller expression of what a Christian is: "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," v. 30. Not wisdom in the mind being acted upon and so I am wise about God, but "of him," that is of God, "are ye in Christ Jesus." I am of God, and I have my wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption of God, all in Christ. I am of God in Christ, and have all there of God in Christ. It comes from Him; it is not my thinking about Him. And so man is totally set aside, flesh is put down. The world by

wisdom was not to know God, but I am in Christ as a new being, a new creature, created again; and I have wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption all in Christ. These verses are a remarkably complete statement of what a Christian is, with full redemption itself at the end, body and all.

Here it is the measure and character and fulness of sanctification; it is not legal nor outward, but what is in Christ. It is practical: sanctification always is, except in Hebrews. We have the nature and the quality of it. If we look at Christ we see what sanctification is. People talk of its being imputed, but that is absurd. Think of the absurdity of talking about imputed redemption! But in Christ all these things are real to me. I say, what wisdom I have! Am I a Platonist? No, Christ is my wisdom. Righteousness is imputed; the term is applicable, but you do not get it in this passage. What sanctification I have! Christ and redemption too when it is all complete in glory. It was all accomplished, but is not yet in its full effect.

As to the order of the words, I take it that wisdom is separated somewhat because that is what the apostle has been talking about. This was not man's wisdom: God had chosen the foolish things of the world, and so on; and then he brings out that Christ is made unto us wisdom, laying a little more emphasis on wisdom. There is a question of different text here, I know, and very likely it may be taken as, "who is made unto us wisdom of God"; but that only gives an emphatic character to it, and there is no real difference. Redemption comes in at the end as the full complete thing. The difference between ek and apo (v. 30) is that, when we say we are "of God," it is positive life; the other is 'from,' on God's

part; whereas we derive our life and nature from God by the Spirit's quickening power. In John 3 it is ek: "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," etc.

Chapter 2.

In chapter 2 we have the apostle's use of what precedes, and it is remarkable how he sets man aside altogether, and then takes the ground, that when he came to this wise people he knew nothing but the cross, and not only this, but that, looked at as a man, he was in weakness himself, and in fear, and in much trembling. He has only the foolishness of the cross, and his speech and preaching are not with man's wisdom, that their faith might stand in the power of God.

In the first five verses we have Paul coming to sinners—his way with these wise ones. There was neither excellency of speech nor wisdom to man's eye. It is not strictly the cross of Christ but Jesus Christ, the positive fact of preaching Christ; and then he takes Christ in the lowest and most degraded way, Christ and Him crucified. The preaching of the cross is not exactly the same thing, but the point is that he was not reasoning philosophy with them but preaching Christ and then, if you take up Christ, it is in this way, as crucified man.

It is difficult for us, used as we are to look upon the cross as redemption, to feel what the effect was on a number of philosophers, what it was to go and say, There was a man gibbeted in——; trust him. To man it was the grossest folly that could be. And see, it is Jesus Christ, His Person here, He crucified. He adds, "which none of the princes of this world knew," or "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory," v. 8. Because He was that, you get His Person, and not merely the fact of

the cross. And it is a very strong thing to put before man; it is what wrote folly on their wisdom and on the grandeur of this world.

The moment man is a sinner, it is another thing altogether; and, the infinite love of God coming in and speaking to man as man, what comes of all grandeur and of all wisdom and of all else? The whole of man in flesh is swept away by it. All that flesh could glory in is there totally put an end to. There is no kind of fleshly glory in the cross whatever. It was God's wisdom to do this: no dignity, no heroism, but shame, reproach, ignominy, and death; it is all of man brought down to where nothing could be found—no, not a stone to put his foot on, to keep it out of the water. None but slaves were put upon the cross, and this is what God takes up to bring the world to nothing, first to nothing in judgment, and to nothing too, when we know He is in glory.

Then it brings forth God, man put out and God brought in. The moment I get that side, I have the Lord of glory, divine righteousness, divine wisdom. "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery." First, he brings the cross to man in every shape and way, and when he has done that, he says, I have crucified you, and am coming to tell you what God is in doing so.

"Them that are perfect" in verse 6 are those that are brought by the cross into this new condition with God; it really is in resurrection if you come to examine it. They are grown men in that condition. What the apostle is looking at here is a person who had the flesh put down with death written on all; all brought into God's

presence and all the world put an end to; there is a new state of things altogether; the beginning of the new creation; what the Holy Ghost reveals and the Lord of glory. It is that the person is brought into the state that the cross brings into. You do not begin expounding blessedness and glory to a person who wants his conscience reached; but the contrast here is the world and the man who has been brought out of the flesh into God's place of blessing in the new creation. "Perfect" is in contrast with carnal and babes in chapter 3:1; it is the full-grown man. Judaism was flesh in that sense of the word: "as unto babes in Christ" is another thing. You have three things, carnal men, natural, and spiritual men. You may meet a person you cannot concur with because, though having the Holy Ghost, his practical state is "carnal," yet not "natural."

In Galatians the apostle says, "the heir, as long as he is a child, diflfereth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all"; but here he is talking of Christianity in so low a state that he could not talk with them of certain things. As to knowledge they were "perfect," but in practical state he could not deal with them as such. I believe there are real Christians who are not perfect in this sense. If one does not know the forgiveness of his sins, he has not the consciousness of his new standing and is not perfect. The apostle is here speaking of their standing, he is taking up the question of those who had God's wisdom instead of man's. When he came to sinners, he preached Christ crucified; and when he had people in a Christian state, he speaks of all the fruits in glory. When he says, "Ye are carnal," it is the particular state of certain Christians who ought to be up to the measure of their standing, but are not.

“The wisdom of God in a mystery” (v. 7) is all that is unveiled of His counsels in Christ; everything that God has done in Christ. If they had seen all the glory of God in Christ, they would not have hung Him on the cross. They crucified the Lord of glory, but they would not have done it, had they known. Verses 9 and 10 are in contrast with the Jewish state of things, “As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” There you get the Jew, the prophet declaring that it had not entered into man’s heart; “but God hath revealed these things unto us.” In the Old Testament these things were not revealed, but now they are. He is speaking of the whole Christian condition and not of the state of the individual, and he takes up the Christian therefore in his full character, and not in his gradual progress, or in his faulty want of development. Verse 9 is often quoted as of present application to the Christian, but the apostle is quoting it to shew what is not the Christian state; for to us God has revealed these things by His Spirit.

In verse 10, etc., you get three distinct steps: the Spirit of God revealing, whether to Paul or others; then the Spirit of God communicating what was revealed; and last, the receiving by the Spirit. The Holy Ghost in us searches all things; there is nothing hid. The prophets searched “what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify”; having the Spirit they began searching out. It is the Spirit in us who searches. There is a power of the Holy Ghost to give all the counsels of God. You find elsewhere that the Spirit of God is identified with the person He dwells in. He makes intercession for the saints to God; Rom. 8. I have not the

word only, but the Spirit within me, and the mind of the Spirit according to God.

As to man, what man knows the things passing in his mind? Only the spirit of the man knows; now we have the Spirit of God, and He knows the things of God, and therefore we know them. Paul then goes on to unfold this. It was revelation to Paul and communication by Paul in the words of the Spirit, and the reception spiritually by spiritual men. To this we may add having the mind of Christ, which should be common to all Christians. There is what I have somewhere lately called the intelligent and the intelligible. The intelligent is capacity without a thought, but add the intelligible and you have the thought as well as the mind. So we have revelation first; then the words were adequate; and then the third thing that through the Spirit I receive it. I know people talk about inspiration, and of Shakespeare being inspired and so on; it is all very well, but did such men have a revelation—a positive new thing from God? The first thing is revelation; what is called inspiration is not so clear. It is possible I may have a revelation from God and never say a word about it. Paul had a revelation and told us nothing about it. Inspiration is an ambiguous word altogether, and people may be deceived by it; but when it comes to a positive revelation, men know they have no place at all in that. Then the Holy Ghost forms the communication too. It is like a fountain, the water is the same, and it comes out as it went in.

I do not think “comparing” in verse 13 is right at all. It is “communicating” spiritual by spiritual; he has the Holy Ghost’s words and communicates the Holy Ghost’s words, and that whether he be writing or preaching. There may be things which I am quite sure of, but which

I may put in a way that is not the Holy Ghost's way. When Paul was preaching, it was not "comparing" at all. "We speak not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." In speaking I speak as from God, or else I ought to hold my tongue. "If any man speak; as oracles of God." This does not mean according to scripture, but as from God; of course it will be according to scripture, but that is not the thing there. This strikes at everything that is of man. "He himself is judged of no man," in verse 15, is man as man in contrast with the Holy Ghost.

In the last verse we have the same contrast with the Old Testament: "For who hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him? "and in answer to the challenge of the prophet it is, "but we have the mind of Christ." If I have Christ's mind, I have the thoughts that are in it and all that is included. We have not the divine mind abstractedly, but we have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us; and then comes all the revelation of the mystery.

I must bring the cross to a poor sinner whoever he is. A person's cleverness will not answer in the day of judgment; the cross is the answer of divine wisdom. Suppose he had made all the telegraphs in the country, when he is dead, what becomes of them to him? God will give you, not cleverness in your mind, but the Holy Ghost, and the truth of God, and the mind of Christ. John says, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." And there is no part of God's counsels that is not now brought into light. As to this the intelligent and the intelligible go together; with us creatures, you cannot get the capacity without the thought.

Chapter 3.

Chapter 2 speaks of preaching Christ crucified to them, and chapter 3 deals with Christians. In chapter 3 it is his second visit to them. The carnal state was not going on while he was there. I do not think he had been twice to Corinth when he wrote this epistle. He wrote this from Ephesus, and the second from Macedonia, when he had sent Titus with the first. Although he says, “This is the third time I am coming to you,” he does not say he had been. He had meant to come by Macedonia unto Corinth, but they were in such a state that he would not go. I do not think that he had been there more than once. In verse 1 he says, I “could not speak unto you as unto spiritual,” and still he could not. “I have fed you with milk and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.” “Hitherto” gives the time all the way along, he could not bring these things before them.

God had said, “I have much people in this city,” but God makes communication to hearts ready to receive them. It was so with Mary Magdalene, her heart clings thoroughly to Christ: the disciples go home, but she stays, and she communicates to the eleven our highest privileges at this moment, and that is because she was thinking about Christ. “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” Such is the message He gives her; it is the first time we have so full a statement. It was the personal affection of her heart set on Him through the attractive power of grace. So with the woman in the city that was a sinner. So with Mary that sat at His feet and heard His word. She comes and anoints Him for His burial. You will always find the

apprehension of the mind of Christ flows from personal attachment to Himself. These people at Corinth were fond of their show-gifts and of themselves, therefore they could not be carried forward. “He that planteth and he that watereth” (v. 8) are merely instruments in God’s hands—ministers of what God gave; they may be and are distinct in their labours, but are only ministers. One plants and another waters, and everyone shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. But they were all one as instruments in God’s hand who gave the increase; yet the Lord owned their labour to each.

Then we come to another important truth, though it is only the outside now; he goes farther in the second epistle. We have the outward house here. There is a difference between Christ’s building and man’s building, even where the men were God’s ministers. In these days it is a very important distinction where church questions have come in from Rome to brethren, if you please, on all hands. Christ says, “Upon this rock will I build my church”: there I have Christ’s building. Of course Satan cannot prevail against that, but it is not all built yet, for it is going oh; and therefore Peter, who alludes to it (1 Pet. 2:4, 5), does not give anybody at work; and so Paul says, “groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord.” There it is Christ building, but here it is man working; and directly we see responsibility we have possible failure. “Let every man take heed how he buildeth.” That never could be said of what Christ is building. But what has been done by the system of popery and all church doctrine is to identify with Christ’s building, that which is connected with man’s building. Against His work the gates of hell shall not prevail; whereas, when it is the thing set up on earth, we have “let every man take heed

how he buildeth," where he does not say the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

In Ephesians 2:22 it is not man's building; there is nothing of man in Ephesians, but just the counsels of God. In chapter 3 we have the apostle as the instrument of the communication, but it is God's counsels and work to bring us into Christ, and so on. The church is the house as well as the body. In what Paul began to build there is wood, hay, and stubble, and that is wider than the body. The house built by Paul supposes wood, hay, and stubble built in, and there are both doctrines and professors; for if a man professes, he professes something.

In the apostle's days the house built by man may have been co-extensive with the body, but we read of false brethren creeping in very early. At first "the Lord added," and there it was co-extensive. When the three thousand were added, they were for certain all real; they were co-extensive as a fact, though not the same idea. Then there was the trusting of God's building in the world to man's responsibility. It had been the same with the law, the same with the priesthood, the same with the government. God set up everything first in man's responsibility, and all fails; but all will be accomplished in the Second Man in power—in rule and priesthood in Melchisedec, the true son of David.

A man may build with doctrines. We are not going to learn doctrines in the great day: they are used now, and you cannot separate these things. A good man may be a good builder, and all be well; but a good man may be a bad builder, and be saved, while his works are burnt up. The bad who corrupts is burnt up—he himself is

destroyed. It is an amazing thing to see that there is a church-building going on upon earth which is not Christ's building. Whenever there is anything for man to do, there comes the question of his doing it properly. Philip brought in Simon Magus, and there was man's building along with the good work which Christ was doing.

The "day" (v. 13) has always to do with judgment. It is the day that tries the work; it is simply and entirely judgment. The day shall be revealed in fire which shall try people's work; that will no doubt happen when Christ is revealed. But the object in speaking of His revelation in contrast with having the Spirit and gifts now (chap. 1:8), is totally different from this, where it is expressly judgment. I may think of both, and of my appearing in glory too. The work might be tested any day, but, as stewards of the mystery of Christ, when that day comes, God will make manifest the counsels of their hearts.

In verse 16, we have "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?" Here it is a collective thing— "ye are." The temple is the habitation in which God dwells. In Ephesians 2 the apostle says, "groweth unto a holy temple." In Ephesians it is a thing of God's work and therefore perfect, whereas here it is a present thing— what is actually on earth. When discriminating so, there are certain things you must take into account. Language in scripture is used about people fitly, and you cannot take them otherwise. If you did, it would be misapplied truth. There is meat in due season as well as good meat. If I gave meat to a babe six months old, I should choke it.

Though wood, hay, and stubble are built in it, it continues the temple of God. Our Lord said, “Ye have made my Father’s house a den of thieves”; but suppose I should go and say, as a general thing, “My Father’s house is a den of thieves,” it would be very inaccurate. Until God judge a system, it remains in the responsibility in which He originally set it. Apostasy has not yet come in; it may be commencing a little now, perhaps, the spirit of it is at work; but positive apostasy is the giving up the name of Christ. In 1 Timothy he says, “Some shall depart from the faith”; and so they did. I think it took place immediately: but that is a different thing; it is only “some,” a matter of individuality.

We must not confound building with wood, hay, and stubble, and defiling the temple. In the former, the man builds upon the foundation, whatever he builds with, and he himself is saved, though building (it may be) with foolish doctrine. The other was positively seeking to corrupt the temple of God itself with false doctrine. A Christian may introduce bad doctrine, and still be saying there is no Saviour but Christ. If he teaches perfection in the flesh, that must be burnt up. Going to convert the world is wood, hay, and stubble, although we ought to have done it. But the man who is seeking to defile brings in fatal errors, and he is not a Christian. I do not know of any Christian who has done this, though it is possible that a person may propagate what he has learned and been deceived into, and thus become an instrument of Satan for defiling the temple; to “defile,” and to “corrupt,” and to “‘destroy,” are the same here. But the Gnostics were defilers; Socinians are such. A Christian may be snared into it, it is true, and he then becomes an agent of Satan in the flesh.

Chapter 4.

This chapter is a remarkably beautiful working of the apostle's heart, but with no particular subject in it. "Ye are full, ye are rich; ye have reigned as kings without us." This, in a sense, is written in irony, but all is of exceeding interest; v. 8-13.

"I know nothing by myself" (v. 4), means I know nothing against myself as an accusation. It is an old English form which was familiar enough two hundred years ago; you will find it in Bishop Hall's writings, though quite obsolete now. "Yet am I not hereby justified," means that that does not clear me, for the Lord judges or examines me. "Then shall every man have praise of God" (v. 5) does not mean that every man will have praise, but that the praise would be of God. When God makes manifest the counsels of the heart, some will get praise; this indeed will be worth something, but now it is all a mere nothing.

"Who maketh thee to differ?" (v. 7) is, If anyone has more gift than another, where does it come from? It all came from God. One was saying, I am of Paul, and another, I of Apollos', but the apostle says to such, It is all yours; and if one is greater than another, who made him to differ? Just as John says, "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from above."

From verse 14, though he bears everything, he lets them know he has power and warns them. Some said he was not coming, but he was, and he would shew the value of their speech. He does assert his power, though very gently, and indeed he was afterwards afraid he had said too much. "My ways in Christ" (v. 17) are the ways in which he conducted himself among the saints, as "I

teach everywhere in every church." "The kingdom of God," v. 20. He preached the kingdom of God, as elsewhere he says, "Ye all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God." He was the minister of the kingdom of God, the minister of the new covenant, and the minister of the church.

Chapter 5.

Now we come to their faults and to discipline. "Commonly reported" means that it was a generally known thing. The first thing we may note is the apostolic power of delivering to Satan. He had judged that, because he could bind on earth: it was apostolic power. Its object, he states, was for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Properly there is no such thing now. If a person is now put out from fellowship, he is not delivered to Satan, though in result he might possibly come under Satan. I know nothing that is a denial of this, though there be no gift of such power. If a person is excluded, it is not delivery to Satan. That made me say he might come under Satan; he is liable to it. To be thrown out into Satan's world is not delivering him or committing him to it. I know of nobody but the apostle who had the power. If there is anybody now to do it, all well; but I do not know how. The church is not commanded to do it here. He says, I have judged already—to deliver such an one to Satan. This was his own act; he did not tell them to do so. He does tell them to put such an one out.

They had not been instructed as to exclusion and discipline; but still in mind and heart they ought to have been broken down: at the least they should have been humble and mourning, as we see in verse 2. If the state

of the assembly is so infirm, or so divided, that they cannot act, it is bad indeed. The difficulty is, the tendency to produce division. If the power of the Spirit of God is not acting on our consciences, one takes up one thought, and another another. That is what he means by “having a readiness to revenge all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled,” 2 Cor. 10:6. But here there was power to bring the matter on; he himself could come in in power, but he was afraid, lest Satan should make a split between him and them, and that is what he means when he says, he is not ignorant of Satan’s devices. Then he tells them to purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. You are not a new lump if you do not purge out the old leaven. God had made an unleavened thing, and they would lose their character by not acting upon it. You are not a new lump at all, if you do not put it away. “As ye are unleavened” is their standing, and you give your character up if you do not act.

If they were not united in the assembly, they should humble themselves. I have often said in preaching to sinners even, that a man who has been brought up in a dirty house does not feel that it is dirty; and so if half the assembly be as bad as the bad one, the assembly must be cast on the Lord and mourn, and therefore in verse 2 he does not say how it is to be done, but till “he be taken away from among you.” They ought to have been before God about it, for they had not got directions what to do. But when they did get them, they acted. If there is a case of flagrant sin, and the assembly does not act, what then? Practically it is no assembly at all, if its will goes with the offence. If any sided with the evil-doer after the testimony of the Spirit of God had reached the

conscience of the body, then he treated them as the evil-doer. The duty is all plain; if there is a wicked person, the assembly must put him out; and a person so put out is not looked at as a brother, and they cannot admonish him as a brother, and I could not have fellowship with him as a brother. Before action I should consult with the brethren only, but should call the assembly together to act. If one had a case like this, say, or that could not be mentioned to women, it should of course be done in a way not to be offensive. But if it is an assembly, the Lord is there, and you must prove yourselves clear in the matter. If the assembly will not put the evil out when it is a case of gross sin, I should have no more to say to it: they would not prove themselves clear.

Leaven is the thing that defiles and corrupts; and others were involved in it because they would not judge it. Suppose you commit a sin, and I treat it as all very well, and keep your company just the same; why, of course I should be known by the company I keep. The proverb is common enough. The leaven was there; and the apostle speaks to their consciences about it. If such a person left, you cannot put a man out if he is out, or has gone out deliberately; but I should announce that he is out. That is hardly putting out, it is his going out. I should say he has left under the charge of such a sin, and gone out of the way, and is outside until he clear himself. If a man has gone out of this room, I cannot put him out, but he is out. As to inquiry, a few brothers may engage in that, but you cannot have a judgment on an individual unless the assembly does it. It is very right that one, or two, or three should inquire into the facts; but any wise godly brethren may do that, and the conscience of the assembly must thereupon be brought into action. If only

some act and put him out, the rest may say they did not do it, and their conscience is not clear.

You must take each case in detail by itself; if one go away so, he has left the assembly; and if he leaves it under a charge against him, he must clear the charge before he comes back. He cannot come back without the case being judged by the assembly. It may be investigated by brethren, but not judged. Further, it should be named, if it be a case of sin and guilt. If a charge of fornication, say so; it is uncleanness; and if it was a public scandal, I should not be in any hurry to receive back. It is not a nice principle to talk about the honour of the assembly being involved; but the Lord's honour should come in. Yet, for the good of the individual, it should be done if the soul is really restored; though it be a strong case of public scandal, let him in again; never mind what people say. Here is one: A man overwhelmed with sorrow, and the apostle tells them to receive him, though it was such a scandal that its like was not even named among the Gentiles. A man may confess his fault, but this does not say his soul is restored. If it is a matter that nobody knows, and the man consults you and confesses all the fault, and is restored, you must judge whether it is a case for the assembly to deal with or not. If it is a matter between two brethren, the two might settle it. The "old leaven" is the leaven of the old nature; the "leaven of malice and wickedness" may be a more active expression. I am not to keep the feast with the old nature at work.

When a man is put out from the assembly, he nevertheless belongs to the house. It is like a naughty child turned out of the drawing-room; he belongs to the family still. Though the church cannot commit to Satan,

to put away abides a positive duty. We have to obey. It is a commandment of the Lord. If you speak of delivery to Satan, it is a question of power. So far as the child's present position is concerned, he is outside the sitting-room; and until he behaves aright, he cannot be let in again.

Christ is sacrificed for us, and we are keeping the feast. That leads to the fact that unleavened bread was connected with the sacrifice by which redemption was wrought. No leaven was allowed in the house at all. Redemption is not an unholy thing. I must have sinlessness along with redemption. In the type you have bitter herbs, unleavened bread, and the passover meat. Here we are keeping the passover, and we must not have leaven, for sin and Christ cannot go together. Intercourse in the main would cease between you and a person so put out. I might invite him to my house for conversation, to see if he were restored; but even that is a delicate thing to do. In my intercourse with him, it would be with the fullest sense that he had put himself at a distance. It would be really ungracious to him to let him feel at ease with me in the place he occupies. You must not weaken the action of the assembly.

Two might be put away together for the same thing, and one might be restored without the other, and received before the other, or dealt with differently. In withdrawing from another, 2 Thess. 3:6, I should treat him coolly. If he complained, I should say, It is quite right; there is my authority in scripture, and I must do so. Here in 1 Cor. 5:11, it says, "no, not to eat." I would not dine with such an one; I would give him to eat if he were hungry, but not eat with him. Take a wife whose husband is put out. It may seem awkward, but her action

is not keeping company with him as a case of will; it is one of subjection to authority.

Matthew 18 is another thing; it is only an individual direction. If the church acted, it would be on another scripture. Refusal to make good a wrong after all these pains might be a ground for the church to put him out. Do you ask if such a brother might not keep the whole thing in his own bosom. That depends on the case. "Thou shalt not suffer sin upon thy brother." If it were merely the idea of a wrong, or he thought the brother was all right after some personal matter, he might say, I forgive you; but otherwise he would be doing him harm by not taking it up. Charity is a keen discerner in all such things. If it is merely personal, I have a title to forgive.

Verse 11 is not a list of those who are to be put out. There is no such list. This would leave a thief or a murderer in communion. How to know a covetous man may be hard; there are cases which are plain enough, but prudence in a family is so close on covetousness, that you can make no line, nor can you act on your own conscience with respect to a man that may be covetous. If a case arise, and the assembly is spiritual, the Lord will make it clear. You will find that where a congregation of saints is spiritual, what is false and hypocritical cannot last there any length of time at all. But you cannot put out any man until he has done something to act upon. He will deaden the meeting of course, but so does all that is wrong. After he is out, the assembly cannot deal with him, though perhaps an individual might in mercy. When he is humbled, we should seek to restore. I do not think there is the power to restore that there ought to be amongst us. If there

were more spiritual power, there would be more actual power over the conscience.

It is sometimes a question, How long is the assembly to go on treating as a brother one whom they have admonished? Samuel mourned for Saul to the day of his death. Some have been under rebuke, or outside for years. Such cases have arisen sometimes when young persons have been thrust forward into preaching, and had the flattery of women, etc. There ought to be an anxious desire for restoration of those put away. There must be holiness, but still a yearning of heart over such, a spirit that would induce brokenness on the offender's part. I am not conscious of any unfaithfulness as to dealing with evil, nor generally am I aware of hardness towards evil-doers.

Verse 5 shews that the ultimate end of discipline should be restoration. You deal with him as a member of Christ, and discipline him as such while he is within, and you put him outside that he might be broken down and brought in again. "Spiritual" has a double character. If I say that man is very spiritual, it may mean he has spiritual apprehension of divine things, or it may be spoken of the assembly. There is a dealing with things and with the conscience of the assembly. The assembly is the first thing to prove themselves clear in the matter. "Them that sin rebuke before all" might be done sometimes when people are put out, instead of doing so. "Rebuke" is convict as well as reprove; convict is before all.

Chapter 6.

We come now to details of laxity as to going to law with unbelievers, to doing wrong instead of bearing it; and to

the question of meats. Also he turns back to the great snare at Corinth, that is, its corruption through the flesh; and with that we get the individual as the temple of God.

It is very remarkable how, in the New Testament, the highest and most wonderful things of Christ are very often brought in and are approximated to ordinary life. Here they are said to be going to judge angels. The Spirit of God brings in the glories of another world and throws their light right into the commonest things here below. There is no other way of judging them like that. If he is telling a servant not to purloin, he gives the whole scope of Christianity for the motive in Titus 2:9-14. And here these Corinthians were for squabbling at law: "Why," says he, "you are going to judge the world, yea, angels!" So again, in contrast with fornication, he says, Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. It is the revelation of such motives brought to bear on everyday conduct that is so wonderful. Flesh is there, and you have to apply these elevated things to judge it. Chapter 12 in the second epistle is most striking that way, in the beginning Paul being caught up to the third heaven, and at the end bewailing the uncleanness among them. Here our very bodies are members of Christ being indwelt by the Holy Ghost.

The saints are to judge the world and the angels, when Christ Comes again; in one sense all through the millennium, but in the main when He comes. Do not you know that? he says. They had, no doubt, been taught by him. Corinth was a dreadful place. When they wanted to say a man was living in luxury and debauchery, they called it Corinthianising. It was a proverb, "Everybody cannot go to Corinth." And by these things the church

was infected. There always is the tendency to be affected by the atmosphere which surrounds us. The habits of the world have a kind of power that must “be felt if there is not a spiritual power to resist them.

In verse 5 he speaks to their shame; the smallest—that is, in spiritual power—ought to be able to judge the things that pertain to this life. And he tells them they ought rather to suffer wrong than go to law before the unbelievers. They were in a terrible state, they came behind in no gift, and they came forward in no grace. His object is to avoid suits between brethren. The Lord says, we are not to resist evil. It is a question of grace, though righteousness is in it. If I can keep Christ’s character, I would rather do so than keep my cloak. It is more sorrowful for the heart to lose Christ’s character than to lose the cloak.

The Old Testament saints will be associated with Christ in the judgment of the world. But the apostle is from time to time writing about the resurrection and the rapture, and he thinks only of those to whom he is writing. He does say, “that they without us shall not be made perfect,” and our Lord speaks of Abraham and others sitting down in the kingdom of God. But Paul is writing to certain persons for a certain purpose and to suit them, so that, while other dogmas may be behind, but very few passages refer directly to them. You will find truth in scripture connected at one end with God, and at the other end with man; but if you cut these ends off, you will find you have got a dry stick instead of a plant. And as it is connected with man, in order to get at the mind of scripture you must put yourself in the place of the people the apostle is addressing and in that way look at it.

I believe the saints of the Old Testament will be there because I see “thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them,” etc. (Rev. 20:4). You gather it from passages in that kind of way. No doubt they will be raised and will not be made perfect without us but with us. The “saints of the high places” in Daniel 7 are the slain remnant under the beast. To be on the thrones of judgment, I suspect, is the lowest part of the glory. So in Laodicea the overcomer is to sit upon the throne. No saint will miss that.

Mark here in verse 11, “and such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” Sanctification is before justification; and when they come together, it is so habitually. You are sanctified to the blood of sprinkling; 1 Pet. 1:2. Now I think scripture speaks as plainly as possible of progressive sanctification; but still, when you have sanctification and justification spoken of together as two things, sanctification comes first. The reason is that, if you put that last, you would have the man with a perfect title to heaven and yet unfit for it. But again you never find fitness for heaven connected with progressive sanctification. There is plenty of scripture about sanctification as to the fact, “growing up to him in all things,” “purify himself even as he is pure,” these all shew progress when I am a Christian, but are not connected at all with fitness for heaven. On the contrary you get “giving thanks to the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,” speaking of all Christians together. Then there is the poor thief who went straight to paradise; of course he was fit for it. Scripture is plain enough on

progressive sanctification too: that is likeness to Christ here.

A man is set apart to God, like a stone in a quarry, and the Spirit of God takes him out; he is quickened by the Holy Ghost and put into the value of Christ's work. "Sanctified by blood "is in Hebrews; which is merely that now this covenant is brought in, for He died for the nation, and the blood of the covenant was shed, and God lays the ground for the people to come in under it; but if they did not, that lay with them. But 'sanctified to blood' (1 Peter 1:2) is by the Spirit of God. Sanctification of the Spirit is not in Hebrews at all, except that we have a glimpse of it in "follow after holiness." Having been washed in the passage we are considering is the development of the truth, speaking of the filth they were in. It is application of the word: "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you"; and he gives the character of that as being sanctified and justified. If "sanctified by God the Father" in Jude is right, the meaning is He did it in His counsels in grace.28 You get no work without the whole Trinity. In the miracles of Christ He says, "the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." "My Father worketh hitherto and I do work." Then "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils." So we are God's children, and have the life of Christ, and it is the Spirit of God we are quickened by.

Instead of the Trinity being some out of the way doctrine, it runs through the whole of the scriptures. Communion is with the Father, and with the Son, and with the Holy Ghost. Again in prayer "through him" — Christ— "we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." You first get it where it is so beautiful to me in the end of Matthew 3. There Christ is taking His place among

the remnant and is baptised by John the Baptist—not that He needed repentance, of course. But then immediately you get heaven opened, and the Holy Ghost comes down, and the Father owns Him as the Son. And there I get my place as a Christian sealed with the Holy Ghost. I too am a son. Heaven is opened to me, and the Father owns me: and in all this I get the first full revelation of the Trinity, where Christ first takes our place in grace coming to fulfil righteousness: the first time heaven is opened: and here I get the place of a man in the counsels of God the first time the Son takes His place as a man. It is all the more striking because the next thing is that He takes the other side of our place: He is led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

Christ at His baptism says ‘us’; but though others came acknowledging their sins, He had none to acknowledge, He came fulfilling righteousness; He was taking His place with the excellent of the earth, and that runs all through, Christ taking His place with His disciples. It is here that the question is raised whether He was a good Jew. “Doth not your master pay tribute? “they mean, to the temple service. And Christ says, “Of whom do the kings of the earth take tribute, of their own children or of strangers? “and when they say of strangers, He says, Then are the sons free. That is, they could not claim it of Him: “nevertheless, that we offend them not,” He tells Peter to go to the sea and cast in a hook for a fish and in its mouth he should find a piece of money which he was to pay “for me and thee.” He commands all the creation of God, and that very thing in which He shews divine knowledge and then divine power was the very thing in which He ranks Peter with Himself.

“Ye are washed” is the aorist middle in Greek, (“you have washed yourselves”) constantly used in that way in a passive sense in the New Testament. What is commonly called passive in Hebrew is used as a reflective verb in the same way. As to “in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God,” the Greek preposition en is constantly used thus; but “by” would be better in both cases. When it is anything of power, we have en as is well known, not for instrumental meaning, but ‘in virtue of.’ You cannot take a word in one language as answering exactly to another in another language: you will make all sorts of confusion if you do. From the different relationships of words, it would have conveyed a different thought to a Greek from its circumstances, though it is the same word that is used in different positions. You get Paul passing over where he talks of honour and dishonour, from en to dia; that shows “by” is not quite identical; dia is the instrument, but en is not exactly that, but more intimate.

By all things lawful, not all expedient (v. 12), he means that there is no difference to him, but he will not allow anything to have power over him. The moment it governs, lust has power over him if it is only eating something nice. There are a number of details here next: meats for the belly, and the body not for fornication but for the Lord; also the Lord for the body. He has taken up the body as well as the soul, though He has not yet redeemed it out of its present state. It is for the Lord therefore and not for its own lusts. And what the Lord has done is, He has made it the temple of the Holy Ghost. It awaits its redemption in the sense of taking it into glory; my soul has the liberty of grace, and my body waits for the liberty of the glory, and all creation waits.

Yet the body now belongs to the Lord, and He takes it for Himself, and the Holy Ghost dwells in it as a temple. “And in your spirits which are God’s” in the last verse is a clause left out in all the best manuscripts.

When he says “he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit,” it is with the thought of authority. It is the Lord Himself you are joined to; the person is none less than the Lord Himself. But one could not intelligently say “members of the Lord,” because then you lose the thought of lordship. Jesus is the personal name: He was raised individually, and if God raised Him up, He will also raise up all His members; Rom. 8:11. On the other hand, “God shall destroy both it and them,” means there will be an end of them. Its present state is all destroyed. The whole topic is clear and shews the absurdity of the thoughts of annihilationists. Man is redeemed, the spirit returns to Him who gave it: God having breathed into his nostrils the breath or spirit of life, man became a living soul. But then these are distinct things, the spirit (it is plain) being that higher part in which we are in some sort of connection with God. In I Thessalonians 5:23, the spirit is that by which we are connected with God. God formed man’s body out of the dust of the earth —not so the animals— and then breathed into man, and so he became alive. Notice the way of doing it too, God taking counsel about it: He had finished the whole creation and pronounced it good, but He did not say so of man. He finished with the animals, and then He says, “Let us make man,” and so on. Man might be at enmity to God, but still there is a relationship to Him, be it bad or good. Hence misery is final, supposing it to be misery, because man has a nature to be so. And thence too the poet says, “we are his offspring.” Take the bad part of a

man and you see it, the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: even when wicked and bad, he has to do with God. In ordinary language the two words—soul and spirit—are used for one another.

“From all filthiness of flesh and spirit,” is simply contrasting body and spirit. I get my spirit sanctified in an amazing way when I love God. But then clearly the soul, if you come to make the difference, is the lower part: there is the dividing apart of soul and spirit, the word of God can come in and make the difference between the two. In one sense I have a soul like an animal, though very much higher in character. As I said to the annihilationists, any stupid child in the streets knows that, if you stick a man, and all his blood runs from his body, he will die just like a pig. There is that animal life. The first proposition in logic is ‘man is an animal.’ But if he becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus, of course his identity is preserved,—as to who, but not as to what he was before. If you say what he was before, it is not the same. The soul is morally changed because I love God instead of hating Him.

In the case of dying the connection of soul and body is lost for the time, but it is not so when the body is changed, for the links go with the body. That was just the difficulty of the Sadducees, in supposing seven men with one wife, when they get into resurrection. In the flesh we have the devil’s sin, that is, pride against God, and the spirit’s sins in our bodies. In chapter 2:14 of this epistle, we have seen that it is the natural man, the man without the Holy Ghost. A man is not a man without body, soul, and spirit. They may be separated for a little, as when he dies. Sometimes it is called, inner man and outer man, soul and body.

Spirit and soul are never separated; one is the higher part of the other, so to speak. The word of God is the only thing that can distinguish them. Philosophers were wrong, as Aristode. To them it was merely mind and the animal soul, which loves, for instance, one's children. I have a mind that thinks about children, and so on: that is all right so far; and philosophers recognised that there was this in man, but they went no farther than this intellect. We know there is a link between man and God, and that is responsibility too, though now man has got into enmity. The "dividing asunder" in Hebrews 4 is that which just gives the difference between the two, for it cuts them into two. Heathens saw the superiority to beasts, but I do not believe the intellect which they owned has anything to do with God. All philosophy is a perfect delusion, intellect has nothing to do with God at all. God may act upon it: that is another thing.

It is not, of course, as with a stone that God acts upon man, but it is through his conscience. It is not the activity of man's intellect at all. A man of considerable intellectual powers is all the more likely to go wrong. God may take a chosen vessel and fit it for Him to act in and by, but never for the vessel to act. Wherever the vessel acts, it shuts God out. That is what Paul insists on so much in the opening of this epistle. And faith is never in the intellect; and, what is more, the intellect never knows a truth. Intellect knows consequences, but these are not truth. That is, truth is not the object of intellect, but of testimony. This is where the difference lies. You tell me something and I believe you, but the thing that receives truth (on, I believe, a testimony) is not intellect. "He that receiveth his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true."

The very thing by which man proves there must be a God is a proof that he cannot know God. Take this world: there is evidence of skill, there must have been a designer, some one must have made it. So with a watch (the common illustration), some one must have made it. So to the infidel geographer they brought once a globe; and when he asked, who made that? “Nobody” was the reply. What do you mean? I ask who made that globe? “Nobody”; and of course, he was confounded. I am not capable of conceiving of such a thing existing without a cause; but if I see it there, I must get a Former of it. I am so constituted that I cannot think of such a thing without a cause. This is exactly what it amount’s to. God must have wrought: without a cause you cannot think it out. I cannot conceive of anything existing without finally a causing cause. But a cause uncaused is above me! The thing that proves He must be proves I cannot tell what He is. Logic says, If so-and-so is true, then so-and-so must be; but this does not say that it is, which is a very different thing to my soul. If I say “must be,” that is a mere inference. The moment I get a testimony that it is, how different! I get a divine testimony, and set to my seal that God is true. This is faith, divine faith. One thing flows from another, and I cannot help inferring. That is the constitution of man, and he must think according to what he is, he cannot think otherwise.

Intellect never discovered anything in divine things; it may deduce correct conclusions, but it never can go above itself. That is another way of looking at it. If intellect pretends to go above itself, it is an absurdity on the face of it. If it pretends to rise to God, He is not the true God at all, but the mere conclusion of my mind. God can act on me, as physic acts on man; but that is not

what I am. God has given us receptivity so far as that goes. It is as simple as ABC. Here is God, and if I bring Him in, it closes reasoning; and if I leave Him out, everything is false. I may have the farthings, but no pounds in the account. Nine-tenths of our ideas come from relationship, not from intellect; just as a child knows its father. Relationship is never known by reason: mind is fond of a kind of metaphysical reasoning about this, but it is all folly. The moment relationship is formed, all moral duty flows from it, and from it alone. Duty has nothing to do with intellect. This it is that makes us totally dependent. Man at the outset tried to get out of dependence on God, and really got into dependence on the devil and his own lusts. “By every word of God shall man live” was dependence and obedience, and that was where Christ was: it is the proper place of every intelligent creature, who ought to be both dependent and obedient.

Then we have here that the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. He acts on the soul and on the heart—Christ dwells in our hearts by faith—but the body is His temple, and therefore it is to be used accordingly. A great deal of mischief springs from not recognising this. The body is only in its right place when it is a vessel which I am just using for God. The body of the Christian is a member of Christ, because he is His, and I am this, and my body is part of Him. It is a temple of God, because the Holy Ghost dwells there. My body is His temple; it is simple statement: but the Holy Ghost is to guide me. “Ye are not your own.” We have the two great leading principles of Christian condition: the body the temple; and I am bought with a price; and for both reasons we must glorify God bodily, because it is purchased, and is

possessed by the Holy Ghost dwelling in it. This gives a great distinctness to the reality of the personal presence of the Holy Ghost. Too often people talk about the Spirit working in their hearts, with the thought only of a mere influence. Even that does produce a certain state of he irt in such, it is true; but that my body is His temple gives reality and personality clearly and in power.

Well, then, I am not to go and abuse the temple of God. This is peculiar to saints since redemption. “He that is joined to the Lord” is a real thing. If I am joined to the Lord, I get all the fulness of Him that dwells in me; which shews the great difference between life and union. People say we are united by faith, and again by life; but neither is true; we are united in life, but the union is by the Holy Ghost. The Old Testament saints might be united in heart and spirit, but this was no union as in the New Testament saints.

Persons dwelling together is not a body. There could not be a body until Christ was at the right hand of God: and you must get the head before you get the body. You have a divine Son, the Son of God, quickening whom He will, but no body formed until the Holy Spirit is given. A person cannot be said to be a member of Christ until he be sealed. Take the apostle for three days and nights. The saints were not the body of Christ until the day of Pentecost. There may be souls in that state now, quickened but not having received the gospel of their salvation; and so doubting and fearing. But we should not judge of souls because they say, “I doubt,” and “I do not know”: so many think it is presumption to say, “I am a child of God.” They will tell you, “I am afraid to talk in that way. I have a humble hope things will be all right; and sometimes I feel happy.” Now suppose I hear at

their prayers, one saying, “Father,” when speaking to God, and another saying, “Be merciful to me a sinner,” then I learn the difference.

Though one call upon God as Father, it is far happier for a soul to see clearly; but when a soul cries Abba Father, he has just the same title to the Lord’s table as I have. The principle is very simple. The Lord’s supper has the character of the one body, inasmuch as “ye are partakers of that one loaf.” If one calls God Father, he is a member of Christ, being sealed with the Holy Ghost. We are not always judges; but the principle is simple. The man that is sealed with the Holy Ghost is a member of the body of Christ, and the Lord’s supper is a sign of the unity of the body. As a member of the body, that is his place. Intelligence is not the test of communion. I do not bring my degree of knowledge of what I have, but I come because I am a member of Christ; and if another comes, of course it is the same thing. The consciousness that God is his Father is upon the testimony of the Holy Ghost. He must have faith in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, not merely in His Person; he receives the Holy Ghost, and is, of course, member of the body of Christ.

Chapter 7.

The apostle turns to marriage in this chapter, and then the general truth of staying wherein you are called. It is a beautiful passage of scripture, as to the holiness of marriage. We must deal with every subject from God.

In verse 12, “To the rest speak I, not the Lord,” is very precious, because the modern infidel speaks of inspiration as if it were the highest expression of the inner life. Now I find the apostle making a difference here, which is instructive. He says, “As I have received

mercy of the Lord to be found faithful," as a man, I give you this experience; and to the rest speak I, not the Lord. Scripture therefore meets everything, repudiating the whole system of those men who deny inspiration, carefully distinguished between Paul's best thoughts and the Lord's commands. On this subject Paul will not give us a command, and he is inspired to tell us that. And very precious that is in itself. We have his spiritual judgment, and him clearly telling us that that is not the command of the Lord. He is inspired to make that difference. Not all that is in scripture is inspired, for you get the devil's words and wicked men's words, but the writer who gives them is inspired to make the record.

Verse 14. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean, but now are they holy." It is in contrast with the Jews; if a Jew had married a Gentile wife, he had to send her off, and her children off too, or he profaned himself. If the Jew were to be holy, they must all go. The Christian system being gracious, it is just the opposite, and the Christian, instead of being profaned by the unbeliever, sanctified him or her, and the children too. They are "sanctified," just in the sense opposite to that in which a Jew was profaned.

The other leading thought of the chapter is, that I am to leave what I cannot abide in with God. Christ being rejected, and the power of evil having come in, though marriage is all lawful, and so on, yet let even those that have wives, be as though they had none (v. 29-31), even using this world in everything as not a possession of mine, as not belonging to me. And so in verse 23. Do not be slaves of men if you can help it; yet stay where you

are if you can, with God. A servant in most cases in the New Testament was a slave; masters might be heathen, and so on. Be free if possible; that was to be preferred, but not to be an object for the heart to be set on.

Chapter 8.

Here we come to things offered to idols. There are two distinct directions about that. They had to own the idol was nothing, and yet own it was, something to the consciences of men. Looked at it in itself, as an idol, it was nothing; and the meat offered to it was what God created. But then the consciences of men got into connection with demons about it. He says at first, “We know that an idol is nothing in the world”; and then again, “As touching things offered to idols, we know, for we ail have knowledge.” But knowledge only puffs up, and the man who knew all this, might go with a clear conscience himself and eat this meat, but would stumble his brother who had a weak conscience.

In verse 6 the word “in” should be “for”: “Of whom are all things and we for him.” I believe that is the right force of eis. And in the same passage, the different uses of the words “God “and “Lord “are seen very clearly. It is not the divine nature as such, but the place that the divine Persons hold in what men call the economy of grace. The Father rested in simple Godhead, but the Son has become a man and taken the place of Lord in His manhood. Then when I speak specifically of God, I speak of the Father. As to Christ, “he shall call his name Jesus” —Jehovah the Saviour—for He shall save His people from their sins; but the place He has now taken is that of Lord. “God hath made him whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ.” It is not that He ceases to be Jehovah,

but He has taken the place of Lord, while the Father rests in simple abstract Godhead. I notice it, because in Christ as Lord I get the grace administered. I am a child with the Father, but if I am looking for administration, I go to the Lord: “Lord Jesus receive my spirit.” “Lord, we have heard by many of this man,” and so on. “To us there is but one God the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ.” It does not say what the nature of that Lord is. He is God and He is man both, but you have the place, the leading place He has taken. “All power,” He said, “is given to me in heaven and on earth; go ye therefore, and disciple all nations.” Defiling the conscience (v. 7), means that, if a man has a conscience about anything as evil, he must follow his conscience, or he defiles it. Mark here, there is no building up on knowing evil. If I think I ought to eat herbs, I must eat them or my conscience is defiled. I must depart from iniquity; but I cannot build up on the negative.

In verse 11, “shall the weak brother perish?” is the tendency of my eating so far as I can go, because I am leading him to sin against his conscience. It is not that the Lord will not step in and save him, but that is what I am doing. We have the same truth in other forms elsewhere, “for if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die” (Rom. 8:13): that is the end of living after the flesh. It is nothing about eternal death or eternal life either. He is dead already, and the end of those things is death. Death is the judgment of God. If a man lives in those things, he shall die. God has shewn the end of certain things to be death, and if I drag my brother into those things, and their end is death, then, though I do not believe from other texts that God will leave him there, yet I am making my brother perish.

It is a great thing never to twist a single text of scripture to a doctrine. God is wiser than we are, and He has made no mistakes. I see people afraid of certain texts about certain doctrines, and I feel, therefore, that doctrine is not a settled thing with them. It is the same in effect in Romans: “Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died”—destroy my brother for a bit of meat! The moment I see that the end of these things is death, and I am making my brother do one of them, it is plain at once that I am destroying my brother, and God’s act to him would be in spite of me. It is quite true, that the moment I look at a believer in Christ, there is no “if,” nor can be, as to his security; he is accepted in the Beloved, and there is no “if anything”; he is sitting in the heavenly places in Christ, and the whole matter is settled; but that is not all that God has chosen to do about him. He has chosen to put him through the wilderness when he has redeemed Him, and then we have “ifs” and “whens” without end: “If ye hold fast,” in Hebrews; “If ye continue,” in Colossians, and so on. But what we have along with it is, absolute dependence upon Another, and infallible faithfulness in Another. As I have sometimes said, I may be standing with my child on the top of a rocky precipice, and he is apt to run about foolishly, and I say to him, “If you tumble over, you will be smashed to atoms”; but I have not the slightest idea of leaving my hold of him, or of letting him fall. Now we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. This shews we need to be kept; but on our side it is dependence on the power that does keep. You cannot confuse that with acceptance; but it is constant dependence upon God keeps my soul in a right state towards Him.

The cautions in God's word make me think of God's perfect love and faithfulness in keeping me; that occupies me in my proper place of dependence. It is the confusion of this with acceptance that makes all the difficulty. I could not say to you now, "If I were to go to Belfast," for I am here; and so is my standing before God absolute. "Who will confirm you to the end "proves that I want confirming. God puts me in a place where the manna will not be wanting one single morning, and so I live by every word of God, and this brings one back to a blessed sense of dependence continually. Redemption brings one into the wilderness, and then what do I find? That God has been thinking of the nap of my coat all the way, nor has my foot swollen along the road, while He leads me there to humble me, and prove me, to know what is in my heart; and again, "that thou mightest know that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." (Also Deut. 8:15, 16.) It is not merely that I am safe in Christ— accepted—but I am kept by the power of God in dependence upon Him; and there it is that I get "ifs" and "ifs," but none upon the faithfulness of God or a doubt about it. It is only as regards myself that I find the constant "if" that keeps me in dependence. On His side, "I know my sheep and am known of mine, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Well, then, the hand must be there to keep me. It makes the perfect faithfulness of God receive us, but then we are dependent upon that faithfulness.

Chapter 9.

In verse 18 of this chapter we find the word "abuse" again; but the Greek means that I use outright for

myself. It would not have been abusing his power in the gospel, but he did not use that power as something to which he had title of possession; he only thought about it as a thing he could use for the sake of the gospel. There is really no thought of “abusing” in it. It would not be “abusing,” to take a salary, or whatever you call it. “Abuse” is a bad word, but it is difficult to give the sense in one word; no single English word suits. As to the other passage— “Using this world and not abusing it”— you hear it quoted by people who are up to their neck in it; and it is, perhaps, more important to notice it there than here. It is using this world as not having it in possession; simply handling it therefore, and that not as property.

The general subject here is ministry. False teachers had gone to Corinth, Judaising and seeking their own, and, by way of getting a great credit, took nothing. Paul, finding it out, would not take anything either; not that he had not the title. He was an apostle, and the Lord had so ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel; but he would not use the power. Whatever it was, Paul would not take it, and the assembly as an assembly has nothing to do with it; community and fellowship in the act is all very nice, yet if they do it together, it is not as an assembly, though in fellowship. If I go to preach and teach, it is as sent of the Lord, though, of course, it is always happy to do it in fellowship.

An assembly would be to blame if they knew an evangelist labouring, and did not assist him. They would be losing one of their privileges. The Philippians were very forward to do it, and so it was now with some. Perhaps it might be to help some other gift, and in

another place. I think that is a most happy thing to find, and would not only have blessing on the one side, but on the other. Locality makes no difference. An evangelist is a servant of Christ, not of the assembly. In Philippians, “now at the last your care of me” is a beautiful expression of the delicacy of the feeling of the apostle; they had left him a long while, or he says so, and then adds, “but ye lacked opportunity.” If things were right in an assembly, all this would be done happily. In many places there are collections at times for brothers at work at home and abroad, which is all very right too. I did not mean that the assembly should not together assist, but that it should not have a control of the preacher in any way; he is responsible to the Lord, and not the assembly’s servant. On the other hand, if they knew any reason for not sending to him, they would be bound not to help him.

If a preacher gives up his trade for the Lord’s sake, of course he may “live of the gospel” by being maintained and fed, getting food, raiment, and what he wanted. He may, if he have energy, work like Paul all night, and so support his house as to prevent selfish people, like some at Corinth, from saying, He is doing it for his pay. Not many have energy enough to do the two things, and do them well. If you have a man preaching, supply him while he preaches; he that ploughs should plough in the hope of getting the fruit of his ploughing; so Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 2 that he must work, or else he will not get his wages. There is a question of translation whether it is “first labouring,” or “first partaking.” It is a mere comparison like the other; if a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned unless he strive lawfully. Only he must first labour to be a partaker. The

verses before shew that he is to endure hardness as a good soldier, and he is not to entangle himself with the affairs of this life. We have something of the same kind in verse 24 of our chapter: “know ye not that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize?” Even what Christ has sent me, I do not take up, for His sake. I glory in this that I have given up everything I had a title too, for the gospel’s sake. It is a very strong expression, Better for me to die than for me to do anything that would hinder the gospel. He was ashamed of the Corinthians.

Paul was not under yoke to anyone in his service, only to the Lord, of course. He was free in that sense; it is what he calls willingly and unwillingly in this chapter. He did it not for his own will, but still he was free from man. Peter did not send him. That was what they charged against him; he had not seen the apostle; he did not come from Jerusalem, and so on. In verse 19 we find what “free” is: “Though I be free from all, yet have I made myself servant unto all.” In 2 Corinthians 11 he says no one shall stop him of his boasting, and he will do as he had done, that he might cut off occasion from others, “that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.”

In verses 20, 21, he sought to win Jews, not to Judaise. Judaising was very common. In itself Judaism was God’s dealing with human nature, to see if good could be got out of flesh. God dealt with Adam and then with the Jew (promise coming in between), but Judaism was God taking up man on his responsibility, and giving him a rule or law, and with it all appliances to help, a priesthood and temple, every kind of help to a man as man, to see if any good could be got from him. It was the

orderly essaying and proving whether man could be on terms with God. He could not please God; but yet it is the constant tendency of human nature to go back and try again, for it does not bow and own; there is no good in it; and so it is always talking about keeping the law, but never does it. Really man's responsibility is not in question at all. There is such a thing; but Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." But that is it which has been brought into the light and condemned, and I have therefore now a right to say I am dead. "Through the law I am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." I am dead and finished as a child of Adam. Because this is not apprehended, there are always some remains of Judaism. "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins which were by the law did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." And the result is, we discover we are lost. Take the whole system of setting up law in any form, and the moving of men's hearts by it: it all owns man still—alive in the flesh. You get it grossly in a self-righteous person, and in a mixed shape in those who try to put law and grace together; but in each and all it is just human nature thinking it can be something. There is something terrible in putting a man under law after grace has come in; it is setting him to responsibility after flesh has been proved unable to meet it.

After the second word "law" in verse 20, there is a clause left out, which is, "not being myself under law." It is recognised as in the text by all who have examined it. He puts subjection to Christ in the place of being under law. All that he means by "to them that are under the law, as under law," is some such thing as that he would

not eat pork, if sitting at table with a Jew. Timothy was circumcised on some such principle. He had no right to be circumcised. It was an arbitrary act (for his father was a Greek), unless he wished himself to be a Jew. Paul yielded to the Jewish Christians in that case, and did it to please them; but notice that the moment he got into a scrape about it, not one of those he sought to please shewed his face to help him. In dealing with Jews he adapted himself to them, but directly that the Jews made the law necessary, he withstood them. He would not give in about Titus, because they were making it necessary. But here in Paul's own case there was no necessity; it was his own adapting himself to them, and just what we ail ought to do. His action at Jerusalem was a further case. The Spirit had told him not to go up, and he could not do anything right there, though nothing wrong either. It was merely to please himself, and under other people's advice, doing this and that after he had left all such things entirely.

There is no limit for the early primitive church but the death of the apostles. Peter speaks of his decease, pointing to a change. But what we have in principle for ourselves is, "that which is from the beginning." If it is not from the beginning, it has no claim of authority at all. "If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father." They had wanted at the council of Nice to establish the celibacy of the clergy, but one old bishop got up and told them they would only be putting a snare to their feet; that was about nine years before some tried at the first so-called general council to lay it down as a rule, but they were hindered, though the spirit of asceticism had come in. A century afterwards you find

the strongest denouncement of these notions. Chrysostom has two treatises against them.

Alford's translation is not to be depended upon. It may be useful to a person who can judge for himself. He had an active mind in raising questions, but I never regarded his judgment in settling them. His was not a sober judgment, and not therefore one to be trusted. What I dread in these new translations is that there is a kind of conservatism of an old doctrine governing them; as, for instance, Alford retains, "Sin is the transgression of the law," 1 John 3:4. Thus you find him keeping to the old thing because it is there. None of them knows scripture or has got truth from scripture, but they bring their thoughts to scripture. Some modern scholars have changed that text, and besides it is clear enough in other passages, as Romans 2:12, "they that have sinned without law, shall also perish without law"; which is in contrast with them that have sinned under law. It is clear contrast there and that in the English translation itself. But they had a doctrine which was that the transgression of the law was sin, and so in John they put it, "sin is the transgression of the law"; but where their doctrine was not in question, they translated it as "lawless." In John it is positively contrary to scripture; for when it says "they that have sinned without law," how can this be if sin is the transgression of the law? And again, how then could sin by the commandment become exceedingly sinful? And again, "for until the law sin was in the world": how could that be if sin was but the transgression of the law?

"Sin is not imputed when there is no law," it is true. But this is not the word elsewhere rendered "impute"; it means the particular sin is not put to account. You are a

sinner and lawless when you have no law, but I cannot say to you, Such and such a thing is forbidden. As if my child runs into the street, instead of doing its lessons, I cannot say in a particular sense, “You have been disobedient”; but if I have told him not to go out into the street, then it is not a general question of his idleness, but I say I am going to whip you for that particular thing. In Romans 5:13, what the apostle is reasoning on is that death was a proof that sin was there before there was law. You cannot confine grace to the Jews, for then you make it narrower than sin; for death and sin were there, and all had sinned, and if you shut up grace to those under law and do not let in the Gentiles, you are making sin a more powerful thing than the grace of God. Death was reigning there before ever Moses’ law came in, and that is the meaning of the expression “who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression,” a quotation from Hosea 6:7, “but they like men” —Adam — “have transgressed the covenant.” These Gentiles never did that, the Jews did. They transgressed it, and Adam too transgressed the commandment he had; yet these Gentiles were under sin and death, though they had no law at all. You must now take up Christ as answering to Adam in headship, though first he adds more, that the law entered that the offence might abound, but where sin—not offence—abounded, grace did much more abound. The difference between “impute” in Romans 4 and 5, is that in chapter 4 it is reckoning a man to be something; in chapter 5 it is putting so much to his account. It occurs again in Philemon, “put that to my account.”

In reading the verse in 1 John 3, “Sin is lawlessness,” it would not have the same effect if you reversed the

words as they stand as in our version; but as in the Greek with the two articles, it is a reciprocal proposition. ‘A blow is sin’; but you could not say, ‘sin is a blow.’ But ‘lawlessness is sin’; and ‘sin is lawlessness’; and he who practises sin also practises lawlessness. It is kai (and) that is used to connect the sentence, which I think brings it back to an abstract proposition. In Romans 5:5, Adam had a law and Moses had a law, and sin was in between and death too. I think you see at once that a law is in contemplation; not so lawlessness, which is expressed by an abstract word.

Sin, I believe, is a man having a will of his own. It so far takes in law that, the moment you have got a creature of God, there was some rule or will of God that that creature ought to obey, but if he does not, he is lawless. To sin, in Greek, is to err, to miss anything, as, not to hit when shooting at a mark, or to reel off when you ought to keep on; to leave a straight right path is the etymological meaning of this word. But it is a very different thing to bring in the thought of law. If I say, “them that have sinned without law,” it makes me think of a law though they have had none. You cannot in the abstract sense think of a creature that has to say to God, without thinking of God’s authority expressed somehow, and this would be a law to him, which also was true in the garden of Eden. But when a fruit was particularly forbidden, it was a legal covenant; “if you eat that, you shall die” —a positive rule. Well man eats it and gets a conscience, and so on. Afterwards Moses’ law was a perfect rule for man in that state, for a child of Adam that had got away from God. There is no means in it of bringing him back to God, and therefore it says, “the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither

indeed can be”: it has got a will of its own. That state we have brought out in our chapter where we were reading, in which Paul is said to be under law to Christ, and yet not himself under law. It is the abstract idea of being subject to the rule of Christ, and so on; yet he states at the same time that he is not under law, he will not hear of that in any way: but he adds “not without law to God,” nor lawless therefore as regards God, and yet he is not under law, while he is rightly subject to Christ.

The mischief of maintaining law is that it sets up flesh, treating man as alive. Now the doctrine of Christianity is that man is not alive. The law has power over a man so long as he lives. Well, if I am alive, I am a responsible man in the flesh, and lost and condemned. But now we are delivered from the law, having died in that in which we were held, and that is where there is no allowance of sin; and he brings in a nature to which the power of Christ is added. He does not set about to leave the man alive and then bring the law to a man that will not bow to it. He did that once of old, but now in Christ we have a new life with power in it, and in that respect the Christian scheme is as plain as possible. It is not bringing a law to a nature that cannot be subject to it, but the bringing in a new nature that delights to do the will of God. You contrast the new nature with will, and then add the Holy Ghost for power.

In Romans 8:10, “the body is dead because of sin.” If my body is alive, in the scriptural sense of evil, it is flesh, but of course this body is a mere instrument. The Jesuits said a body ought to be a mere carcase and obey. “On account of sin” is the practice. The only source of life to the Christian that he owns is the Spirit. I hold my body dead, because if it is alive it will be a fountain of sin. Sin

in the flesh is clear in scripture. You never get flesh alone unless merely as to the body, as “the life I live in the flesh.” The “body of sin,” in Romans, is taking it as a whole: as I might say the “body of heaven,” the whole of it. In Colossians it is “body of the flesh”: it is the idea of the whole thing going as one lump. I do not doubt there is an allusion to the body, but the thought is the whole thing. This body is looked at as the seat of sin, I have no doubt.

We get the two parts of the thing from being dead with Christ, dead and alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Then follows “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” In the Spirit of life I get power. Then comes the other side: “God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” The law could not do this; it might curse, but it could get nothing good out of me. Where I was, Christ came there to die, and there and then God condemned sin in the flesh. Christ was made sin for me, and that which was tormenting my mind God has condemned altogether, and there is an end of it for faith.

It is like “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,” only this goes farther. First, as to sins, the Lord bore them and put them away; then I find there is a tree of evil in me, what of that? It is all condemned upon the cross where Christ died, and you are consequently to reckon yourselves dead. I have done with it—sin in the flesh: that is, faith has. I know it is more difficult for us to lay hold of that, than to lay hold of the forgiveness of sins, because it contradicts our experience. If a man comes and tells me my debts are all paid, I believe that; but if he said, “You are dead to sin,” I say, “How do you mean

that; for I was in a passion this morning?" and in this way experience contradicts it. But it did die in Christ's death; it is all dead and gone, because I am in Christ, and Christ is my life. And when the flesh comes and shews its face to me, I say, You have had your day, and have been ended. I have a right to say this, knowing that Christ has died, and God condemned sin in the flesh there. I have a perfect title to do so, and also I have Christ as my power. Being a partaker, in verse 23, is the joy of seeing souls saved, and being saved himself.

Now we come to one of those verses people are afraid of looking in the face. "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep my body under, and bring it into subjection, lest, that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway," v. 26, 27. The word "castaway" troubles some. People have tried to make out that a castaway is not a castaway. I see no difficulty in it at all. The apostle supposes a case: one is preaching to others, and perishes himself. Paul was perfectly well assured as to himself; but he says if he had been merely preaching, he would have been falsely assured; but if not merely beating the air, he was rightly assured.

The running to "obtain" is the general idea of the incorruptible crown of glory. He has salvation in his mind: "that I might be all means save some," and so on. He is not thinking only of the reward of service, but he takes it all here in the most general way. Scripture is plain enough: "Every man shall receive reward according to his own labour." "There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brother, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to

come, life everlasting." There is that which characterises the faith of the Christian, and makes eternal life the reward. There is the keeping of the body down, that is, the contrary to preaching. I am not merely a preacher, but a liver, "lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." You must run lawfully, as a Christian, not merely preach; or you may have all the sacraments, as they are called, and yet fall in the wilderness. There must be reality, whatever else there is.

Those who weaken the force of the word "castaway "do so right in the teeth of the passage. It has no reference to the quality of the preaching, for the apostle says, "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air, but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." "I myself," is not my service, nor my preaching. To be a castaway is to be lost—to be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." What Paul means is, he is not only a believer, but is living like a believer, or he might be cast away as well as other people. I have not the most distant doubt that God will keep His people; they shall never perish. But suppose I say, "If such a person stayed in such a room, he will never have consumption." So if Paul himself had been preaching only, not living, he would have been a castaway; but he was not that, and he was stating how he was living that he might not be a castaway. The point is, that you must strive lawfully and according to the rules. Now the rule of Christ is, you must live as well as talk, or else be afraid of the consequences. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die."

In Revelation 22:14 we read "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life." But I have no doubt it should be read, "Blessed

are they that wash their robes," etc. I believe the book of life is final, and all the devils cannot blot a name out of it. Where it speaks of blotting out, it is like a registry of votes. If it is proved that a certain name has no right there, it is blotted out. Every professor's name is in the book of life: but if God wrote it, it will never be blotted out. A mere professor writes his name himself, but he has no right to be there, unless God has written his name, and it will be blotted out. In Revelation 22:19 it should be "tree of life," not "book of life." God takes away no name that He has written. In chapter 13:8, it should be, I doubt not, "written from the foundation of the world," and not "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"; and such a name will not be blotted out. I suppose the book of life (chap. 20) is after the names are blotted out, for verse 15 is "whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Although they are there judged for their works, their names were not in the book. Blotting out is, because a man's name was there that had no right to be there. Moses had the same thought. He says, "blot me out."

"Life," and "living" in scripture, when God uses it, is not always the thought of mere life; as "Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee." It is divine favour also. This is one of those cases in which I do not see that those who make difficulties have in the least gained anything. I do not think that the idea of blotting out is all; there is the reality. God puts absolute principles, which lead to certain consequences, and if a cap fits, let a man wear it. People try to torture passages to make them consistent with doctrines, instead of taking the doctrine from the passages. Take "if ye live after the flesh ye shall die"; I am not going to weaken that. Again, "to them who by

patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and incorruptibility, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." Then, says some one, a man is saved by his works; eternal life is dependent on patient continuance, etc. It is practical Christianity brought in at once. I resist altogether the attempts to enfeeble that pressure on the conscience which I see in scripture. "Work out your own salvation" is not temporal salvation; it is in contrast with Paul's working, as he might say: I was labouring for your salvation when I was with you, and now you must do it for yourselves, because I am here in prison; but you have not lost God by losing me: "God is working in you both to will and to do." You torture the scripture otherwise. In Philippians, salvation is always looked at as with glory at the end. It was not the mere salvation of Paul's body in chapter 1:19. We always have that truth in that epistle founded on redemption. The cross has laid hold of me for the glory, but I have not yet laid hold of it, and what I ought to apprehend is that for which I have been apprehended. And God's way was when He laid hold of Paul to put him through the wilderness, and make him work out his salvation to the end. When I say God is keeping His people, I ask too, Why has He to keep them? Because they want keeping or they would fall.

You have the two things in John 10: "They shall never perish," inwardly, nor be "plucked out of my hand." But this is not to weaken the plain positive passages which are given as warning, and meant to be as warning. We have the "ifs" in Hebrews, and in Colossians 1, "if ye

continue," and so on. Now I suppose I believe that God is keeping His saints, and still I say to you, "If you continue to the end you will be saved." A methodist thinks and will say the same, but he thinks such an one might be lost after all; while I am perfectly certain that he will never perish, that is, if he really has life at all.

Different states of soul need different treatment. We must give meat in due season. A passage which might help on one, might puff up another; that is a question of spiritual wisdom in dealing with souls. All that I feel anxious about is the maintenance of the positive dealing of scripture with conscience. Take that passage in Romans we referred to: "Who will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who, by patient continuance," etc. Well, a man says, There may then be good people, and if they work good, they will get glory, and honour, and peace. But I say to him, "You are wrong entirely; there is none good but God." There is plenty of scripture to meet such a case, but we need not weaken this sentence in Romans in order to do it. It is the necessity of God's nature, that there must be a certain life and character in a man for him to be with God. We have a scripture that God has given that nature, and that He will keep it to the end; but the latter does not enfeeble the fact that the nature is such as it is. You must have that life and walk in that life, or you will not be in heaven. Thus we have broad dealing with conscience, and that is what we must not weaken. We have it plain enough in scripture, unmitigated and unenfeebled. Consciences want it, they are slippery enough. If I use it to weaken a person's faith in God's fidelity, I use it wrongly; but I want to give it all its force as it stands, while giving meat in due season. Suppose I

found a person slipping into sin, and I say to him, “Well, never mind, God is faithful”; though that is abstractly true, it is not what I should use to him then, but just the opposite. Yet if God did not keep me, I know I should be soon slipping off somewhere.

Chapter 10.

This chapter is a continuation of the same subject. All Israel were baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of the spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” They were, as we may say, in the Christian profession, standing in this world. Paul is proving that a person might persist in the outward observance of Christianity, and yet be lost. But there may be such a thing as having the shield of faith down as a chastisement perhaps, but that would be the only case I can recognise of loss of assurance where it has been really known; that is, I mean where a man is given up to it, and to the fiery darts as a kind of chastisement.

I remember a person who was away from fellowship for fourteen years, and a high Calvinist spoke to him as a child of God, which became the means of bringing him in again. He had got puffed up, was a kind of prophet, Irvingite, and so on, and the devil had blown him over. Very solemn indeed! But I do not want a soul to lose his assurance; it may be the power for bringing him back. I do not say of a child that is naughty, he is not a child, neither do I wish him to think he is not. If you find a person in despair, you may feel it is the divine nature

there. God reconciles absolutely His holiness and His faithfulness, and all else. We may be taking them apart, but He never does.

We have in this chapter certain truths typically presented— the keeping of Israel as a whole, or to the end, as well as the fall of these individuals. In Numbers 15 we have the security of God's purpose most beautifully set out. In Numbers 14 He says their carcases shall fall in the wilderness. He pronounces judgment on the whole nation, save two persons. The entire people refuse to go up and take possession of the land, and the Lord says, "doubtless ye shall not come into the land," save Joshua and Caleb. Then in chapter 15, "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land," etc., and goes on with His own intentions just as quietly as if nothing of chapter 14 had happened.

"Baptised unto Moses," is what we call being associated with him in these ordinances. "Baptised with the baptism of John," was objectively the thing to which they were brought: so it was baptised "unto" instead of "into." The Greek preposition eis refers to the point you are going to, unless hindered. I might say I am going to Rome, but robbers might come in and stop me, but eis has that force. Pros is "towards" with the accusative; with the dative it is rather "there," but with the accusative it is distinctly objective. The sickness is not unto (pros) death, but for the glory of God, that is, it was with that object in view. In Ephesians 4 ministers were given with a view to (eis) the work of the ministry, eis the edifying of the body, and pros the perfecting of the saints. The prominent thought is the perfecting of the saints, the more immediate point is eis: the former was,

that is, an eternal thing, but the work of the ministry was a present thing, and what they were at then; the perfecting is a definite result in view.

In the middle of this chapter we go from the outward thing to the inward. We have had not merely those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus, but those who were baptised to Moses, and did eat the same spiritual meat, and so on. These really partook of the privileges and yet were lost. You may have really Christ, and yet God be not well pleased with you. A person who is living after the flesh shall die. He therefore cannot have the real thing. This passage is not a warning against having a thing and in any way perishing, but against having the signs of the thing and then perishing. It is addressed to saints "with all those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus," however bad they might be at Corinth. It would be a very dangerous thing to say that people were outside warnings and dangers because they themselves are so bad.

We have here a kind of Sardis, and a terrible thing it is to have a name to live, and yet be responsible. "I gave her space to repent, and she repented not." The whole professing church will be cut off; they wax worse and worse, but still the responsibility is there, though they have left their first love. To the Thessalonians Paul had written, "Ye are not of the night that that day should overtake you as a thief." It will overtake the world so, and the Lord writes to Sardis, "lest I come as a thief," that is, treat you as the world. There will be a testing-time, and then some will be cut off. In the beginning of all, the Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved; but when we come as far as Jude, we see apostasy coming in, evil men creeping in unawares. In

verse 8 fornication refers to the particular danger they were in. All their relatives around them went on in that kind of thing, and they themselves were therefore in danger of slipping into it. Fornication was not a type. These were the things that happened then in Israel, not the figures of things for us, but the judgments that came from them are our warnings.

As to their idolatry, I doubt if a single sacrifice, unless an official one, was offered to God all through the wilderness. In Acts 7:42, Stephen says, “Have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them.” The official ones probably were maintained, or might be; and at large what they did offer might be professedly to the Lord; for when they made the golden calf, Aaron made proclamation, “To-morrow is a feast to Jehovah.” God had ordered them to bring the blood of every beast they slew to the tabernacle, or rather the beast itself.

In verse 11 the “ends of the world” is the completion of the ages. To me the world now is not under any dispensation, but the whole course of God’s dealings with it are over until He comes to judgment. Man was under responsibility from Adam to Christ, and then our Lord says, “Now is the judgment of this world.” Historically I see this: up to the flood no dealings of God, but a testimony in Enoch. We see a man turned out of paradise, and presently God comes in by a solemn act, and puts that world all aside. Then after the flood we see various ways of God with the world. He begins by putting it under Noah. He gave promises to Abraham, then law raising the question of righteousness, which

promise did not. Law was brought in to test flesh, and see whether righteousness could be got from man for God. Then God sent prophets until there was no remedy, and then He says there is one thing yet I may still do: I will send My Son; and when they saw the Son, they said, “This is the heir, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours,” and then, so far as responsibility went, God was turned out of the world. Then comes the cross, and atonement for sin, and a foundation for a new state of things altogether, and that was the completion of the ages. God is not now dealing with man to try if he is lost or not, and so in John’s Gospel man is gone from chapter 1. The first three Gospels present Christ to man, and then He is rejected; but in John 1, “He came to his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” There we find God’s power coming into the world, and the Jews all done with: only some receive Him who have been born of God, and so John’s Gospel is thoroughly what men call Calvinistic.

As to invitations, it is not incorrect to say to an unconverted man, “Come to Jesus.” We may go “as though God did beseech you by us … be reconciled to God.” God is obliged to have ambassadors for Christ now that Christ is gone. Beseeching is, so to speak, more than saying, Come. Christ says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,” in the chapter where He had already said, “We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented,” Matt. 11. Thereon He begins to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works

were done, declaring woe unto them; and then comes, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” And then He says, “Come unto me,” etc. He speaks of the judgment as already come upon them; then there is nothing for it, for no man knows the Son but the Father, neither knows any man the Father save the Son. He bows to His Father completely in rejection, and it is consequent upon that rejection, that, like Noah’s dove, He finds there is no single place for Him to put His foot upon; and so now He says, If you want to get to heaven, come to Me outside the world. The gospel tests, and people will not receive the gospel any more than they could keep the law.

In 1 John 2:13 we read, “I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning”; that is, they knew Christ had come into the world. They knew a great deal about Him, but no man can fathom the Son but the Father. “Son” is that being who was in the form of God, Christ, who “made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant” and so on; but if you ask how God can be a servant, you plunge into difficulty by getting into the reasonings of men.

Returning to our chapter, we have now identification with the table; the eaters are partakers of the altar. In eating of it, you identify yourself with the body of Christ, for “we are all partakers of that one bread.” Someone once wrote to ask what was the proof that it was the body of Christ! And I found from another that it was understood only to speak of the unity of those who were actually partaking. But what the apostle is saying is, If

you go and eat of these idolatrous altars, you identify yourself with them. As Israel after the flesh, if they ate of the altar, they identified themselves with it; so if you partake of the table of the Lord, you have a common part with others with it. It is not itself identity with the body, but that which is the sign of it. You cannot partake of Christ and of demons at the same time; this is, “cannot” morally. The peace-offering gives the understanding of it: some was burnt on the altar, but of the flesh the priest ate the part offered to God, and they themselves, the offerers, ate the rest.

The principle was that the eaters were identified with the altar. If it were a thanksgiving, it must be eaten on the same day, but two days were allowed in the case of a vow, because there was a stronger energy in it, and none might be eaten on the third day at all. And so, if they were at table at a feast, he says, Eat what is set before you, unless it is given you as having been offered at an idol’s temple, and then eat not. Of course you could do the act of eating of idols’ sacrifices, but you cannot eat to God and to the demon together. Then comes the question, whether it is only those who are eating who are identified; and the local church is spoken of as the body of Christ, but I must take in all Christians when I go out into the mystic body. The communion (koinonia) is merely the external act of partaking, but if it is of Christ, it is the whole body. I cannot call an assembly the body of Christ, except so far as it may represent the whole body. At the altar there is identification, I am in communion with it; you do not get communion with the Lord’s table, but taking a part in it; 1 Cor. 10:21.

There is a distinction: the Lord is the One who is over me. I do not think Christ is ever called the Lord of the assembly. He is the Lord of the individual, but not of the assembly. Head of the church implies union. Head of the body is not the same thought as the head of every man; that includes wicked men as well as good. The head of my body is head, and therein is union; but when I speak of head of every man, it is lordship over man. In Ephesians 5:29, “Even as the Lord, the church,” should be “Christ the church.”

“He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit” is spoken of us, because He is a glorious person, and I by the Holy Ghost am one with Him who is such; but that is very different from the thought of Lord of the assembly as such. The thought destroyed the unity of the body, and this was the use that was made of it. He is Lord in the assembly. I suppose every Christian would own the tide of authority in the Lord. Christ is generally the official name; it is not an absolute rule, but in most cases we have lost the the Christ in the English. There is a Greek rule, that if you have the article and the thing that governs the genitive, you have the article with the name, and there is a question then whether you say “the Christ,” or “Christ.” “The Christ” may contemplate the church too, as in “so also is the Christ.” In “whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ,” he takes the lowest character first, and says, “He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God,” that is, he that has faith in His person.

The thought that was put out as a difficulty is, that the unity is merely the unity of those who are actually partaking. The bearing of it all is to make independent churches, whereas the apostle is here looking at them in

connection with the fact of their partaking at the table; but he adds it is the communion of the body of Christ; and then we have the whole body, while those who may be present stand as such for the time.

In chapter 12 you have two statements. Verse 12, “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ,” literally the Christ. Then in verse 27, “Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular,” takes in the whole thing, and the character that belongs to them. In our chapter we have two things; for if I speak of Christ’s body, there is His literal body and His mystical body. His literal body is broken, and His mystical body is a united one.

The “one bread,” in verse 17, represents Christ; it is the loaf on the table. We all partake of it, and are therefore one body; “for we are all partakers of that one bread.” Before it is broken, in a certain sense, it represents the body of Christ before it was broken; but it does not form a sacrament in that state, because we have not the figure. It is true I eat Christ as the living bread that came down from heaven, but I go back to do that after I have eaten of Him as broken. I cannot think of the body of Christ without bringing in the mystic body, and verse 16 identifies me with the thought of the body it belongs to. The communion of the blood is always identification with the blood of Christ as shed for us. I do not know another word so good for it as that. Israel had their character from that with which they are connected; so with us, it is with Christ, with His body and His blood. It is not the spiritual feeding of my soul, but it is in the sense that my hand is partaker of the life of my body. “Joint participation” does not express it, because that is

rather the act of partaking, or might only go so far. I may partake and not be in communion with; but it is in the latter way we are identified with Christ as His body.

“Demons” refers to idols’ temples as such, because it was to demons they offered, and not to God. It is monstrous to apply it to any professing Christianity. In verse 20 we have distinctly what is the meaning of “the cup of demons.” If any tried to eat of the Lord’s table, and also of the table of demons, that would be saying, “I can eat with a demon, and I can eat with you.” This would be provoking the Lord to jealousy, as in verse 22.

The difficulty we started with seems all cleared to my mind by chapter 12:27. The Corinthian church was not the body of Christ. It is a sheer attempt to make one meeting independent of another. That is not the apostle’s mind through this chapter at all. But it is what was attempted by connecting the lordship of Christ with the assembly as such. Some said Christ was Lord, and they obeyed the Lord, and acted under obedience to the Lord in any one place, and nobody else had anything to say to them. At first I could not think what they were aiming at, insisting on His lordship in this way, though a man surely is not a Christian if he does not own the lordship of Christ. “Calling on the name of the Lord” is a sort of definition of a Christian. What we have been considering is ecclesiastically a less vigorous attempt at the same purpose. They asked what proof we had that the Lord’s supper was an expression of the unity of the body. It was this that made the separation in——. Now what brought me out of the Establishment was the unity of the body: otherwise I could have gone into some independent church or set up one for myself, perhaps. I

do not think many would deny that there is one body in words; but the practice denies it.

I could not go to any loose table as the Lord's. People do and call it the Lord's, of course; but I do not call it so or I should be there. Many go with a good conscience, I doubt not; but they do not meet on the principle of the unity of the body. If all the Christians in any place come together, they would not be a church and members; there are no members of a church. The idea and the term are unknown to Scripture altogether. Members of Christ's body, and therefore members one of another, is right, and that only. There is not the most distant approach to the common idea.

"All things are lawful" (v. 23) is connected with what is sold in the shambles. The apostle alludes to the custom of selling carcases for food in the common way after the animal had been offered in an idol's temple. But suppose we were sitting at a table with a person just come out from idolatry, and he said, "That joint was offered to an idol." His conscience is not free, and for his sake I do not eat it. To me it is all common meat.

In Acts 15 the commands to abstain from blood, from things offered to idols, and from fornication, are obligatory on a Christian now. They are not from law, but from Noah. Not that I should think if I had eaten blood, that I was defiled by it, for it is not the things that go in that defile. The above three things are special: one is life, and belongs to God; then idols are the giving up of the true God altogether; and fornication is giving up the purity of man. They are the three things which form the standard elements of what I have to say to God in. The two are plain enough: the third may be less clear. If a

man came to me and said, ‘That rabbit was caught in a trap,’ I could say, ‘Well, I will not eat it, simply for his sake.’ To me these three principles are the expression of man as belonging to God, and not to his own lusts. As to blood, it is the life, and clearly belongs to God, but I leave every man’s conscience to himself.

Chapter 11.

Here we have another instance of how the greatest truths are brought into connection with commonplace subjects. Here is a question, whether a woman is to have a covering on or not. The whole ordering of God is brought in to say whether a woman is to wear a cap on her head (v. 3-16). It was the custom there with women inspired by demons to have their hair flowing out wild, and this was not the order for a woman. They were to recognise the authority of man if they prayed or prophesied. Women did prophesy, for Philip had four daughters that did. The woman had her place for praying and prophesying, but not in the assembly. Men are to pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands. If a woman’s husband were unconverted, it would not be right for her to pray with him if other men were there.

In nominal Christianity we have to take things as we find them. I have known a converted husband, when he went from home, tell his wife to pray with the household, including unconverted men; but I do not believe it was right. The woman’s head was to be covered. The apostle shews by her hair that God had covered her, and her mind and will are put on the same ground. A woman ought to be covered at family prayers, or as one of Philip’s daughters prophesying in her father’s house. The principle applies to both praying and prophesying.

The man is the head of the woman, and she puts a covering on her physical head to shew that there is authority over her. The apostle takes the state of the head of the body as a sign of the condition of the man or woman in respect of their moral head. The woman's head—the man—is her head really, and she must cover her own head in sign of her subjection; and so she says in effect, I have no head myself; the man is my head, and I am in subjection. The man could not do that, or there would be no visible head. A woman's gift ought to be confined to women, or to her own family.

As to the difference between preaching and teaching (v. 4), in point of fact, all preaching is teaching now. At first they went and announced the fact— "Jesus is risen from the dead." I have not to do that so much now; I have rather to describe the efficacy of the effect; though I believe the more these things are set out as facts the better, although they are now all admitted. The more we make our preaching the history of a fact, the more powerful it will be. You do bring facts before people if you say, This was God's Son, and so on; otherwise it is teaching, except so far as we press the facts.

I do not accept a woman's going out to evangelise. I never saw a woman meddle in teaching and church matters, but she brought mischief upon herself and everyone else. If she sits down with a company before her to teach them, she has got out of her place altogether. We read of Tryphena and Tryphosa, who laboured in the Lord, and the beloved Persis too—each in her own place of service. You find all honour done to women in the Gospels; but the Lord never sent out a woman to preach; neither did a man ever go and anoint Christ for His burial. The women's prophesying was not

preaching. There came an inspired teaching, to which they gave utterance. I believe it was in an extraordinary way, as Philip's daughters. Women can be used, as Mary Magdalene was sent by Christ to His disciples. If Christ sent a woman to carry a message, the best she could do would be to go and carry it. It was a mere message; it is no place of teaching; no matter what the message is, it is but a message. Suppose it was written down and was special instruction, the teaching then was in the message, not in Mary Magdalene's place. Scripture says, "I suffer not a woman to teach." She was not to teach at all. She can lead on those who are converted without setting up to be a teacher. Teaching is expounding to people put under you to receive certain doctrines.

The apostle is not speaking of wearing the sign of subjection at all times, but I believe it would be very comely. "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels," v. 10. She is therein a spectacle with all present to the angels, and angels ought not to see disorder among Christians. The whole subject is modesty, and order, and comeliness, and things in their right place. Therefore the woman ought to have power on her head on account of the angels, that is, the sign of subjection to her husband. Angels should learn something in the church.

As to the "image of God," in verse 7, "image" is something that represents another, and so a man represents God, though certainly he has failed to fill it up. The image of Jupiter was not necessarily like Jupiter, but it was made to represent him. So man keeps the place, though he has fallen in it—the same place in which God put him. He was made sinless, but beside that he stood as the centre of an immense system: no

angel was that, no angel was the one single centre of a system all around him. Adam was. And indeed to be that is just what men are driving at in one form or other in the world, and in the church, and in Christendom. If Adam had remained, all his family would have been looking up to him. Here man is spoken of as “the image and glory of God” and in James “made after the similitude of God.” But he is not in likeness now.

The first Adam was the image of him that was to come; the last Adam takes the place of the first: only the last Adam was in counsel before the first was in responsibility. The last Adam was first before God, and when the first has failed, the counsels are brought out in the last Adam. You get the first man put in responsibility after the counsel, and then the second Man was brought out in the accomplishment of counsel. That settles all Calvinism and Arminianism and such like systems. All the responsibility goes on until it has been thoroughly brought to an issue at the cross, and man will not have God at all: but in that cross God does a work that lays the foundation of everlasting glory; and then as soon as that is done, all these counsels are revealed, not accomplished yet, but revealed. Thus since the cross man’s responsibility, as such, is over; it is not that he has not debts and sins, or that he was not responsible: all that is true, but God was rejected finally, and God comes and works His own work all alone by Himself. When that is done, He tells out His counsels and what He is going to do. At the beginning of Titus, we read “the acknowledging of the truth” —the gospel comes and man is responsible to own his ruin— “in hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began, but hath in due time manifested His word

through preaching which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour."

First, He begins with Adam, and that is all ruin. 2 Timothy 1:9 gives us "who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death and hath brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel; whereunto I am appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher of the Gentiles." It was all in God's counsels settled in Christ, but when Christ came, it all came out to us. It is a mistake to think predestination in itself has anything to do with the counsels of God. If God came down now and chose fifteen of us who are here, it would be just the same as if He had done it before the world began. It would be just as arbitrary, as the world would call it, to take fifteen now, as to take fifteen before the world began. But He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.

"Incorruptibility" refers to the body. "Mortal" is never applied to anything but the body. The corruptible mortal is that which goes to dust; incorruptible and mortal alike have only to do with the body. So we see in 1 Corinthians 15. It is not necessary that the body should go to corruption: the incorruptibility of the body is brought to light by the gospel. We do not find it in the Old Testament, having little hints here and there and that is all; eternal life is mentioned twice in the Old Testament; "life for evermore "in Psalm 133, and "some to everlasting life "in Daniel 12:3. You may perhaps spell it out, and some of them did, the Pharisees for instance.

Hezekiah says “the living shall praise thee” in contrast with the dead in Isaiah 38. When we are raised and changed, the “incorruptible” will be made apparent; when the dead are raised in incorruption, they will not corrupt any more. Immortality may refer to the soul; there is no difficulty about it.

At verse 17 we have the assembly, and in terrible disorder. “Heresies” and “sects” are the same. It is no use taking up words in an exclusive way; as, for instance, to distinguish worship and homage. We use “worship” now for worshipping God; but when our version was made, it was not at all so. It says “they worshipped God and the king “in the same sentence, and so in the church of England marriage service the man says, “with my body I thee worship.” It did not mean worshipping God at all. Here we have three words, heresies, divisions, and sects. Schism is a positive division; heretic is merely a man being at the head of a school of doctrine, as that of the Epicureans. There were many schools of doctrines, or heresies. In modern language the word has come to mean false doctrine. If we were all breaking bread together, I might make a party and yet no schism, but it might go on to that. “Damnable heresies” means bad doctrine. We are to reject a party school in the church: “a man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition reject.” Have no more to do with him.

In our chapter the apostle says, “First of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you.” I do not suppose tliey had openly divided, but they were making parties; and he says there must be heresies among you, though no division yet, but that came from the setting up of these schools. Heresies

and sects are not exactly the same. There are only two words in this text; “divisions” is the word schismata (v. 18), and the word heresies (hairesis) (v. 19), is often translated “sects.”

In verse 18 “the” church would not do at all. It is not the church, but in that character of meeting, whenever the church met as such, not restricted to the breaking of bread on the Lord’s day (for so the first day of the week was called): when the assembly met together the apostle taught the people. They might not have broken bread whenever they came together. If notice was given that the assembly would meet for a particular purpose, it would still be the assembly, though all did not come; it is the assembly when they come together as such. A reading meeting would not be such though all were there, because that is not the character of the meeting. A meeting for prayer is an assembly, but hardly the assembly of the place. Meetings are meetings of the assembly if it is understood that they meet as such, but the meeting must be accepted by the assembly. What I look for is the consciousness of meeting together in the Lord’s name as one.

It will be observed that Paul received his instruction concerning the Lord’s supper by revelation. The church and the unity of the body was the very thing entrusted to Paul. It is the local assembly here—the saints at Corinth, but what is wanted for action is that the whole assembly should come together for the purpose and with the intention of coming as such. Sometimes the Lord’s supper is taken in a private house when a person is sick, and if it is done in unity, it is all well and very nice, but when a person is sick, I might not do it for other reasons. In the early church they used to send out a

piece of bread dipped in the wine, to shew that they were one. If I were ill for two or three weeks, I should bow to the chastening. A few might go to an isolated one, and break bread with him, if it is done in the spirit of unity; but if done in a party feeling, it would be wrong. It need not be named first if there is confidence; but if there is distrust, it should be named. We have no rule as to breaking bread oftener than every Lord's day. But I took the Lord's supper with the young men who were reading with me, every day for a whole year. So the early church did.

The words "take, eat" (v. 24) should be omitted: I suppose he expresses what is weighing on his mind, and "take, eat" does not come into his mind. To "be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (v. 27) is disrespect to it. Suppose I spat upon my mother's picture, in spirit I should be spitting upon my mother; it would be doing scorn to my mother, and so it would be in this case; to be guilty of it means to be guilty in the way you are dealing with the body and blood of Christ. Some leave out the word "unworthily" in verse 29, but it has been used before, and the sense is all right: it is in verse 27, and therefore it means so eating and drinking, that is, unworthily. The eater and drinker in verse 29 is the same as in verse 27. "Not discerning the Lord's body" is that a person takes it as his own or common bread and wine, perhaps drinks and gets tipsy. Carousing would not be discerning the Lord's body. It has nothing to do with being unworthy to eat or drink, but is the manner of doing it: in Christ, he is worthy; out of Christ, he is unworthy, which is another thing.

There is another principle at the end of the chapter which is not without its importance, and that is the

government of God over His saints. “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many sleep; for if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged; but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord that we should not be condemned with the world.” It is nothing difficult, but very important. We are chastened that we should not be condemned. “Come not together unto condemnation “(v. 34), is to judgment, it is your own fault that you should have to be accused and judged. The word “condemned” (v. 32) is distinctly in contrast with “judged” as well as in contrast with “chastened.” “Condemned” is right in verse 32; but he eats and drinks judgment, or fault, or crime; for it is the thing a man is accused of to himself. “Condemnation” is not right in verse 34; “If any man hunger, let him eat at home, that ye come not together unto condemnation,” judgment or fault. Our word “crime” is from the Greek word: it is the judgment that is passed, but it comes to be used also for the fault itself.

They were told to “tarry one for another,” because each had been eating his own supper before his neighbour’s came, making a picnic, as it were, as they pleased. I do not know that they became actually drunk, but some were what one calls carousing. It is all readily understood, if you remember that they were taking a meal before the Supper. It is “the table of the Lord” in chapter 10, and “the supper of the Lord” in our chapter. We must keep each in its own connection. In chapter 10 it is the table of the Lord in contrast with the table of demons. There is no thought of that here, but the apostle is on another point, and with those who had nothing to do with demons. There was that which represented the body of Christ, and they were

carousing, and getting tipsy or very near it; it was now the abuse of what was on the table.

In general the weakness and sickness would fall upon those doing wrong, but God might take away one righteous man to chastise the assembly, though it was not the case here: this applies only to the persons, the individuals who were guilty of the disorder. I think that the assembly ought to have judged it, and restored order: there was guilt in the assembly too. If an assembly is in a bad state, the Lord can combine the two, and wake up the conscience of the assembly. If the Lord take anyone so, it may be to his glory: in such a case he would be a martyr. When God deals in this way with individuals, we are outside of all dispensations.

There are two principles in Job, chapters 33 and 36. In chapter 33 God deals with men “in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed, then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man.” There God stops him. Then, in chapter 36, we have more; not that God only deals with man in His own sovereign way, but “He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous, but with kings are they on the throne, yea, he doth establish them for ever, and they are exalted.” There we have the special fact, beyond the general care of God; just as in the case of Laban and Jacob, God is also always looking at the righteous, blessing them, as a rule. “As kings are they on a throne”; that is, figuratively. They are righteous people that God owns, and that God also chastens. We find it more distinctly when there is a particular government of God, as in Ezekiel 18; and sometimes the sins of the fathers

were visited on the children. Then, in the church of God, we have it definitely and little known. The apostle can tell them why this chastening came, “and if he have committed sins, they shall pray for him, and they shall be forgiven him,” that is, unless it is a “sin unto death.” Only, observe, the assembly ought to know why they are in such and such a condition. I do not doubt there are now quantities of discipline and sorrows that come upon the saints as discipline; I do not say all: you may find a man born blind who neither sinned, nor his parents; or, again, “this sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God”; or God may unite both. He might have chastened Lazarus, and yet used it for His own glory.

Discipline may be to check a tendency. Paul had a thorn in the flesh, that he might not be puffed up. The order is, we are chastened for a fault, but there may be much more. Paul meets with a messenger from Satan to buffet him. If a godly person were taken aside from an assembly, the assembly ought to inquire why it was so. It might be because they did not give heed to him; but that becomes a question of spiritual discernment. In Job the righteous are in contrast to believers. The value of the Book of Job is, that you get the great principles of God in connection with man. God was using everything for the purpose of helping the righteous man, and Satan was bringing in all that he could against him; and that before there was either law or gospel. As I observed just now, all sickness need not be discipline. Suppose God saw some evil among the saints: He will take means, in various ways, to arouse them to a sense of it. In nature you find a quantity of hidden caloric constantly, that comes out the moment there is something to call it out. It is a wonderful thing, when we think of God, that God

not merely has saved us, but never withdraws His eyes from us. In a way it is as wonderful as is the salvation. Those who did not bow were cut off— “shall perish by the sword” — “Hypocrites in heart,” “cry not when he bindeth them,” goes further still. Notice, it was not the devil who began with Job, but God set Satan at work. The devil did not know what God was doing. “Hast thou considered my servant Job?” It was a great conflict between God and Satan, with a man between them. Satan’s object, of course, is all mischief, but God allows him.

There is a difference between chastening and scourging. Chastening is a general word (as, for instance, the education of children) and the same word is used for “teaching,” and a certain correction and discipline, and even punishing too; but when you come to scourging, it is the positive action and punishment. As a general rule, if we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged of the Lord. All will come out at the judgment-seat of Christ; it will make no difference, whether we have been chastened for it or not. It will all appear. I cannot know as I am known. I cannot give account of myself to God, if I do not give account of everything. And that, I believe, is a great blessing.

None of my sins will come up in that day as a question of judgment on myself. As to imputation, “He hath not seen iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel,” when they were iniquitous and perverse all the while. But at that day I shall see all God’s ways to me, and His dealings with me all through. If I look back now, I can see faults before I was converted, and nothing else; and after that, faults that I have to be humbled for, and I say, How could I do so? Yet it does not rest on my conscience as

though it was there. And then I shall see the goodness of God, with a blessed sense of how He has brought me through all, and what God has been to me in it all, with no question of judgment, or thought of it, for I have not then a nature that sins, even as to my body; I am a new creature.

There should be fear of one kind in connection with the government of the Father, but it is not servile dread; “Blessed is the man that feareth always.” “Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear,” 1 Pet. 1:17. And that is connected with the Father, and he continues as to the cost of redemption for motive: you know what it cost to redeem you out of your sins, and now, upon that ground, you think of your Father upon whom you call. There is no fear of God when I am going to meet Him, but now is the time to walk in His fear. If a Christian sins, it brings down a dealing of God with him, unless he confess it at once, and then God has no pleasure in afflicting. We find plenty about it in James 5:14-16, and in 1 John 5:16: such as, “God shall give him life for them that sin not unto death,” and so on. I remember once saying to a person, “If you do not bow and break off that particular thing, you will not get well of your affliction.” And three days before he died, he said, “I would not bow to the will of God; now it is too late.” I have no doubt he went to heaven.

I could not say that, according as we love Christ here, we shall enjoy Him hereafter. Reward is for our labour: as to our place, we all get the same glory as Christ, “when he shall appear, we” —that is, all Christians— “shall appear with him in glory.” And Paul cannot have anything better than that; but when you come to labour, it is a very different thing, and reward is accordingly.

The Thessalonians will be Paul's crown, but they will not be ours; that is clear. We know not how this will be accomplished, but in glory Paul will have them as his crown, yet he will not take away Christ's crown; for it was all grace that did it, though Christ is pleased to reward the labour when it is faithfully done, owning, not me, but the grace of God that is in me. The reward has nothing to do with motive, and never is the motive for action in scripture; it is the encouragement in the service, when the person gets into trial by the motive.

Well, it is a great thing to see that there is this present government of God. There are cases where evil is the fruit of sin, believing or not believing; evil is in the world, but much is positive discipline, where, if there were faith to deal with God about it, the discipline would be removed. James 5 can be acted upon where there is faith to do it. I have known it acted on, and the use of oil also, in two cases where they asked for it themselves. In one case the doctor had said nothing could be done for her, and she had better go home to die. She recovered, and was walking about that week, and taking care of the poor. She had three daughters after that. In the other case I remember, the one prayed for was out in the street, and at a place where there was a very broad crossing; but a boy had placed a barrow across the path, and she stumbled against it. Her own brother who was passing ran to help her, and found it was his own sister, whom he supposed to be dying at home. Another case was that of J——, who was ordered not to speak or stir by the doctor; but he rode over to a place some twenty-five miles. When the brethren went in, he was vomiting blood, but he rode back the twenty-five miles; afterwards he walked fifteen miles. It was a prayer-

meeting in his case, but he was not anointed with oil. He was twice married afterwards. Other cases I have had myself, having laid my hands on a baby once. Such things have generally been at the beginning of an awakening: there is an energy of faith that brings in God more directly. It is a question of faith very much, but this necessarily in the sick person. Some have professed to have the faith constantly, but I do not put much confidence in that. I believe God would answer the prayer of anybody that cried to Him.

Discipline would not go on after the prayer of faith. James refers to a case of discipline distinctly. Paul was sick, and the Lord had mercy upon him, but we do not know that he was prayed for at that time. He could perhaps have raised himself, but the apostles never wrought a miracle for their own comfort. Paul left Trophimus at Miletum sick. The words, “And if he committed sins,” shew that James refers to discipline. And the forgiveness is a question of present government, as the church can also forgive. I do not think we lay to heart enough the fact of government in that way. There is many a case, I am satisfied, which is real chastening, and all the doctors are of no use. It may sometimes be without any specific sin. I used, at one time, to be ill every year, and I laid it to this, that I did not keep close enough to the Lord in service. But you must take care that such a thought as that does not become legal. We read, “Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit.” This is not always for discipline; it may be for instruction. The Lord can combine the two. When Paul had a thorn in the flesh, whatever it was, it made him contemptible in his preaching, and was discipline, lest he should be puffed

up; and so it was his glory and his discipline. The Lord can unite these things, but we cannot. Yet in His hands it may be our honour and our discipline at the same time.

Paul did not fail in asking the Lord to take away his thorn, though he may have failed in spiritual discernment: it is not the granting of a thing that proves whether it is right or wrong. Our Lord asked that the cup might pass away, and it did not, though the asking was in perfect submission, and He had His answer in resurrection. Yet “for this cause came I unto this hour.” A person losing his mind may be in discipline; for “Affliction does not spring out of the dust” in any way. Take Job: he had elephantiasis, or whatever you call it; and when he had a house, there were plenty of winds to blow it down, and plenty of people to sweep away his cattle; but it was a particular use of these by Satan, and all within God’s limits.

To return to our chapter:—we come now to spiritual manifestation. This is all the true order of the church. You do not get a hint that there were any elders, nor a suggestion to make them; either there were none or they disappear from view. And it was the Lord’s goodness to give us here divine instruction how to go on, and give it in a way that suits us now. There may have been elders, but if so, seeing that they are not mentioned here, it is all the more strong for us now. In the action of the assembly the conscience of the assembly must be cleared: elders by authority could not do that. They could not put out. I remember a terrible hubbub in Geneva on this. I said only engineers can make a good road, but, when made, all the carters in the country can use it, and their elders—wise and godly brethren—were of immense value; but the action in

actual discipline, publicly, must be made by the assembly; for the assembly has to clear itself, and no other way will do. As he says, “You have proved yourselves clear in this matter.” Suppose the elders had put a person out rightly, this would not clear the conscience of the assembly. It would only lead ultimately to sorrow that they had to put him out. A brothers’ meeting can only deliberate and take counsel, and perhaps the matter will be better weighed there than with a whole body of people.

The first thing here in chapter 12 is to distinguish the Holy Ghost from demons. The Corinthians were very fond of gifts, and so were liable perhaps to be ensnared by satanic manifestations; but no demon would say “Lord.” If any spirit said “Lord,” that was by the Holy Ghost. The point here was to distinguish between a good spirit and a bad one. It should be “no one can say.” Sometimes the use of “man “is mischievous. It may be spirit, angel, devil, or anything else; it is merely a being, and “man “in English is wrong. Evil spirits are at work now, and in the same way exactly. When the apostle was preaching, there came one and said, These men shew us the way of salvation. Now, apart from experience, you would not expect a demon to say that. How were they to distinguish? Mormonites used to go and preach the Lord’s coming and baptise, and then when they had so laid hold of people, they would preach other things altogether. False doctrine may not always be the direct action of an evil spirit, but often it is. There is more the action of Satan in certain cases than people suspect. I do not doubt that in Irvingism there was much of it. And then if they were treated as Satan they would have no power at all. I was told at—— they had a great deal more

charity than I had; I really have no charity for the devil. When asked in Somersetshire to meet certain people, I would not go. Prince (of the Agapemone) stated publicly in the town of Bridgewater, that they could not preach or do anything because of the brethren who were there. And I believe he said the truth. So in W——'s case, I said that I would not go near, unless the Lord led me there, and then He would give me strength. S. wanted me to go, and I said no. H. came and I went with him, and the first night, I said, "I cannot say, but I think it is of the devil." W—— had stopped them from breaking bread; he said that "whenever there was any evil and nobody knew it, they were all contaminated, and they ought not to break bread, as they were all of one body," and so he stopped them. His wife could hardly contain herself against me. The next night I thought over it and cried over it before the Lord, and the following day I said it was the devil. The whole thing passed, and they have gone on happily there ever since. I believe he was puffed up, and that his wife was the real secret of it, and the devil was there. He had been much used, five hundred being converted in one year: it is said nine hundred, but an opponent said there were not more than five hundred. All are going on happily now, though they were very angry with me then. "Anathema Jesus" was the utterance of a man. The spirit said it, but by the man's mouth, of course. Anathema is a curse. It is never used in a good sense in the New Testament. The anathema among the heathen was a thing devoted to the gods and was killed. "Anathema maranatha" is a curse on him when the Lord comes.

We have then "gifts," "administrations," and "operations"; the Spirit, the Lord, and God. There are

diversities of gifts, but one Spirit. If they were demons, they were diversities of spirits; you might have a legion of spirits in a person, or “seven demons.” But here it is one Spirit. “Administrations” were by one Lord, so that anyone in any service is the Lord’s servant. We have the unity of the Spirit in contrast with these demons; next various administrations, but one Lord; and then these operations, which were a secondary and narrower thing, but one God. One God worketh everything; it was divine, one Spirit giving gifts; one Lord with administrations under Him; and then it is God that is working everything. “The administrations” may be wider than “the gifts,” if we take in elders; but in Romans 12 they all run together.

The manifestation of the Spirit was not given to every man. If I work a miracle, or speak with a tongue, that is a manifestation of the Spirit, but it does not say that a manifestation was given to every man. The point was, that these Corinthians who were fond of gifts were using them wrongly, speaking with tongues that were of no use to anybody; but the apostle says the tongues were given you to profit with. If it is not to profit, you are not to use it, whether the Holy Ghost is there or not, that is, in the gift. The order and moral rule of the Spirit is paramount to mere power by Him. There may be power, but a person is not to use it else; “the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.” I may have a real moving of the Spirit, and am yet to hold my tongue for all that. If three have spoken, and I have five prophecies to tell, I must hold my tongue. The church suffers both from presumption and unused gifts—it varies in places. I believe there are many gifts repressed. The principle here is distinctly stated, that power is not to guide us.

The rule for my using it is that it profits those to whom I speak. If one spoke not to profit, the others are to judge; and if they tell him of it, to do it as gently as they can. It is not the prophets only who are to judge. It leaves it open to those who had the capacity to do it.

In the Old Testament prophets, the relation between power and exercise of gift may have been different, though there is something like it in “while I was musing the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue.” We now have the Holy Ghost, but then a man was like a tube or a pipe to carry a thing, and they began to search “what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.” But now all that the Holy Ghost gives He gives to the person who receives it, and that makes a difference in the nature of the thing. As to ourselves, whatever the Holy Ghost reveals to any of us, of course we have it in the word, but the Corinthians received it for themselves. When God shone into Paul’s heart to make him an apostle, He shone into his heart the things he was to be an apostle about, and we have them in the written word—words, as we were seeing, given by the Spirit for the purpose. So I now drink for myself, and then communicate it; rivers of living water flow from me. So God shined into Paul’s heart for him to give out. He had it to use in the consciousness of the possession of the thing itself for himself.

In John 3 we read, “We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen”; but it is Christ who is

speaking there who says, “No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.” It was Christ telling them heavenly things, and that a man must be born again, or else he could not have them. The point was that man, as a man, was gone and done with, and Christ had brought in what was heavenly. The “lifting up” was the cross, not the ascension. “We have heard out of the law,” they said, “that Christ abideth for ever, and how sayest thou, the Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?” John 12:34. And in John 8:28, “When ye have lifted up the Son of man.” Clearly it is Christ rejected from the earth, and not yet in heaven. But a Christ rejected from the earth is a total breach between God and this world. It was alone between God and Christ. The whole question of sin was settled when Christ was lifted up from the earth before He went to heaven. Everything in this world was shut out; even the disciples were shut out. He said to them “ye cannot follow me” now; and then God is glorified as the consequence of the cross. We have it in the tabernacle; when a man went into the court, he met the altar first. The first thing we meet is the cross. Christ was lifted up in view of the world; but He is neither on earth nor in heaven, and the grand question is, when man turns Christ out of the world, can He do such a work that God can take Him to heaven? “I will draw all men unto me” is in contrast with the Jews who rejected Christ. He will draw all men unto Himself. In John 3 it is not merely that man is a sinner, but “we speak that we do know and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?” He brings down heavenly things which no one receives

at all; and so in the next chapter He goes to Samaria, and grace comes out in God giving from Himself without expecting anything of man. “God giveth not the Spirit by measure” is there spoken of the Lord. I believe it is an abstract principle that the Holy Ghost comes, and is not a mere influence of which you may have more or less.

Remark in our chapter that we have an intimation of the deity of the Holy Ghost as well as of His personality. “It is the same God which worketh all in all,” and then “all these worketh that one and self-same Spirit.” And then you have what is more often practically lost sight of, the personality of the Holy Ghost. “He divideth to every man severally as He will.” You cannot say this of an influence, for it is He worketh and He wills; which is the most distinct expression of the action of a person. I think the place in which we find the Holy Ghost in scripture is striking, I mean as acting in us. In the order of God’s dealings—He is not the object, but as a divine power, He is the agent. The Father and Son are objects, but the Holy Ghost is the agent, and so is more mixed up with things in us, because acting in us; so that there is a natural liability to lose sight of His personality. The Father and Son are objects of faith. “We have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ”; through Christ “we have access by one Spirit unto the Father”; so that the Spirit is working in us. The Father sent the Son, and He went back to God; but the Holy Ghost’s being in us is mixed up with the workings of our minds.

We have three things in Romans 8:27, He that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit; then the Holy Ghost Himself also; and that in us, for our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. This is not a mere influence, which is a very common idea. You find

persons when you speak of “the Spirit of Christ” take it as a term of Christ’s character. It may include that, but also very much more. Scripture is plain enough: only we are apt to get confounded in our minds. The Spirit is life, and He is the spring and power, and power of hfe in us. It is from Him the life comes; “the body is dead … but the Spirit is life”; it is the Holy Ghost in us. He is the power of the life, and characterises it, and righteousness is the effect.

In chapter 8 of Romans we read of Him both as working in life in us, and also a distinct Person. First as a nature and character; and then (for we cannot separate a spring from its stream) after verse 14, we have Him as a Person in us and with us: “the Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit,” and there He is distinct. The Spirit is life, and then He bears witness, which separates the two. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” is the indwelling of the Spirit, but it is characteristic there. An unsealed soul is not Christ’s in the sense of being a Christian, as God owns a Christian to be. It is not that he does not belong to Him, for He belonged to Him before, but I cannot call a person a Christian who is not sealed. He may really be Christ’s in the sense that God is bringing him into it all; but he has not got into Christian place and standing. “We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba Father.” And “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his,” refers to that. It is a person who is not an unbeliever. There was no verse in Scripture so difficult as that to me for years, until I saw that the whole chapter refers to the Christian position as such. It is not

merely life: we receive the Spirit as life, and as a Person. The two are true.

In Romans 8:14 He is a distinct person from us; in verses 12, 13, it is transitional. Chapter 7 closes with "Who shall deliver me?" and we get the deliverance up to the resurrection of the body in chapter 8:1-11. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus "comes first, then the body is dead; as I said it is spring and stream; neither one is the other; the spring is not the stream, nor the stream the spring: yet if you stop the spring, there is no stream at all; but beside that, there is a divine Person who makes my body a temple; the same Holy Ghost, but in a distinct character. In "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit," it is the flesh contrasted with the Spirit, as you have in Galatians. He is the Spirit of life; we are in the Spirit; the Spirit of God dwells in us; and then we have the same Spirit in His formative character; then, "if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin"; and then, "the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead." The Spirit is first, the opposite of the flesh; next, He is formative of the new man; and then I find Him raising up the body into glory.

The Spirit dwells in me. He is called the Spirit of Christ, because He expresses Christ in me. The opening of Romans 8 is closely connected with chapter 7: "The law of the Spirit of life," etc., sums up chapter 7 with the character of the deliverance. By the body being dead is meant that there is no life, it has no life, but is a corpse, and the Spirit is life. As to the words— "is none of his," though I may be sure that God is working, yet I cannot say such an one is His until he is sealed. I cannot say till then, as an absolute fact, that he belongs to Christ. Then he would know it himself, for God has given to us the

earnest of the Spirit. The man is wrought by God for it, but that is not the same thing as his being in the place.

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” means that where the Spirit is, the man is free. Redemption sets a man at liberty, and then, when he has the Holy Ghost, he knows the liberty and enjoys it. A person is sealed when he can say, Abba Father: only there are some who say, “Father” in prayer, and yet have unbelieving thoughts about themselves. It may be such an one from bad teaching is afraid of acknowledging what he is, but he has the Spirit of adoption. He has liberty too with God, and there is the important place to have it. He has a consciousness that God is his Father; it would be much better to be able to tell other people so. A man in Romans 7 has not that liberty, which in type comes in with Israel, before they had crossed the Red Sea. It precedes sometimes the first part of Romans 5, though not always, but it is modified if it come after. It is connected with our dying with Christ, not with Christ’s dying for our sins. The fact in Romans 5 that I am forgiven, when I know that, modifies it. Forgiveness is not death with Christ, but the knowledge of forgiveness brings in a character of love and mercy and non-imputation, which greatly modifies the remainder. The deliverance by the doctrine of the death is in chapter 5, whilst chapter 7 comes in to shew the bearing of the doctrine of death on law; but the knowledge of forgiveness modifies the power of the law. Chapter 7 might be a person who has the Holy Ghost, but only in a certain sense. In that chapter he takes the thing in itself completely, in its full actual character, and this does not touch the question of forgiveness at all. The sealing comes upon the knowledge of the work by which we are

forgiven, not upon the knowledge that we are dead. But one may be in a legal state though knowing forgiveness. The full character of Romans 6 is Jordan, not the Red Sea. The Red Sea is that Christ died and rose, Jordan is my dying and being risen with Christ; but when I look back with clearness, I see that I died and rose with Christ, and then I get Jordan. We get the consciousness consequent upon Jordan.

Marah throws in the bitters of the way. Circumcision is not in the wilderness, which so far complicates it; they have to drink death in the wilderness—the bitter water—for they have been saved through it; and they have to get it applied; but when I have the full consciousness of liberty, I must go through Jordan, and then circumcision comes; the reproach of Egypt was never rolled away until then. It was not, of course, that they were not out of Egypt, for they were, and in the wilderness; and there we have the two parts of the Christian life: the going through the world as a wilderness, and that distinguished from sitting in heavenly places, or the land. We must have death and resurrection for both; but if it is in Christ only, I am but in the wilderness; but if I get Jordan, then I have the realisation of my having myself died and risen. Then I get circumcision, and never till then. Those who had only a place in the wilderness, and its character, were not circumcised, and therefore they had nothing heavenly, unless it is said that any one tasted of it from Eshcol. I think we have something of this in John 3.

We must have Christ's resurrection even to get the earthly blessings of Israel, and therefore, in Acts 13 Paul says, God raised Christ "up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption"; and "I will give unto you the

sure mercies of David," Isa. 55. Israel could not have them without death and resurrection, and therefore the sure mercies of David are proof of resurrection; there was nothing sure till that. If they trusted to a living man, all failed. Then only I have them so, and a master of Israel ought to have known that. Therefore when I have heavenly things brought in, I have the cross to bring them in. I do not merely have the death and resurrection of Christ as that which delivers me from Egypt— "by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit," which is true—but I have also all things brought to me, as risen with Christ, through the Jordan.

Circumcision, in the end of Romans 2, is looked at as a real thing, and all is the work of the Spirit, when you come to the actual application of it. I have forgiveness of sins, and deliverance from flesh; and not only practically mortify my members, but I say, I am dead; for I have died with Christ, and that is Jordan; then we have liberty, and what is heavenly. Romans 3 to 5 I link with the Red Sea, and chapter 6 with Jordan. I am dead, only I am looking back: first, I must have Christ entirely alone—lifted up; then I must, so to say, put myself in Christ by faith. I died then, and then I myself am actually dead also, across the Jordan; and then I get into this heavenly standing: not merely am brought into a wilderness, for there it is that flesh is tested, but into the land where I am fighting, so the Lord's host in Canaan, and have nothing to do with flesh, but am risen, and only that, and therefore I am simply the vessel of God's power against God's enemies. Notice, that the beginning of the wilderness is a little picture of grace, which stands by itself entirely: for the things Israel were chastened for afterwards, they then had blessing about.

If they wanted flesh, quails were sent at even; but afterwards, in Numbers 11, the Lord smote them with a very great plague for the same murmuring for flesh.

Strictly speaking, Jordan is connected with Ephesians only. Colossians may be in advance of Romans, introducing resurrection; but it is only partial in Colossians. You are there risen with Christ, but not sitting in the heavenly places; you are risen, but still on earth, and that is more like the Red Sea than Jordan. If ye be risen, seek the things above. It does not say you are sitting in the midst of them. In Romans you are not risen; in Ephesians, both risen and seated; in Colossians it is rather between the two. You do not get the Holy Ghost in Colossians at all, save once the "love of the Spirit." We have death with Christ in Romans, resurrection with Christ in Colossians, and sitting in heavenly places added in Ephesians. Not that it is all the apostle is teaching; he takes much for granted also, as "in Christ," for instance: such an one had title to everything, and he speaks so in Romans. You are alive in Christ, but he does not there speak of with Christ. With Christ I have come out of death, which is different from receiving life. If I have come out of death, and am risen with Christ, that is very different from simply receiving life. If I look at Christ as having given life, it is a divine person quickening me; but if, as risen with Him, I look at Him as the one who has gone into death, and with whom I have risen, then I have gone through death; and so it is that risen with Christ is so much more than life through Him simply.

In Romans 7 the experience is that of a man quickened but not dead. In the early part of the chapter we have the doctrine that we have died, and so we cannot have

the two husbands; and the law cannot have power over us, because we have died. It will be seen therefore that chapter 7 is the application of the doctrine of chapter 6 to the question of law, and there the experience is given of a man that is under law who cannot say he is dead. There it is not “risen with Christ,” but married to another who has risen. You cannot have law and Christ together. Then the figure is changed; for it is we that have died, though it is the same in principle. And in the end of the chapter we have the experience of a man that is under law, and not delivered; he has the life given, but he is not dead and risen. It is the fullest expression of a man under law, and having life. And as such we are delivered by finding out, not merely that Christ died for our sins, but also that we have died with Christ. And this is the doctrine of chapter 6.

In Ephesians the principle of the body is brought in. We are in sins, and Christ dies, and in the coming down to that, He put away all our sins, and then God comes and raises us all up together, and this involves union in one body. In Colossians it is only just brought to the edge of what is called “one body” (Col. 3:15), but in Ephesians the body is the great subject—Jews and Gentiles all one body—and then “quickened together with Christ,” and “raised up together” (that second “together” is Jew and Gentile), sitting in Christ, but not with Him.

Chapter 12.

Turning to 1 Corinthians 12 we have both the manifestation of the Spirit and miraculous gifts. The apostle was speaking in contrast with demons, etc., but it is a manifestation of the Spirit in power: so in chapter 14, if all prophesied, they were convinced of all, and

judged of all, and thus the secrets of his heart were made manifest, and so, falling down on his face, he worshipped God, and reported that God was in them of a truth. It is more the outward manifestation that is in his mind here. It applies in principle to what remains now. There is the word of wisdom, etc. Speaking by “two or three, and that by course,” applies now. I never did speak, if three had spoken. Simply reading a chapter is not speaking. Ordinarily we call prophecy the foretelling future events, but this is not the meaning of the word. It is “forth-telling,” not “foretelling.” We have this prophecy spoken of in verse 10, for edification, exhortation, and comfort, but not as inspiration of some new revelation. The word is used both in a general way, and as a direct gift. We have not it in the special way.

The baptism of the Spirit (v. 13) was on the day of Pentecost, and when an individual believes, he is sealed and anointed. “In [or by] one Spirit” is “in the power of.” A person says by one Spirit he was baptised, instead of saying in the power of one Spirit: it may become equivocal. You have been baptised by the Holy Ghost coming. By the coming and power of the Holy Ghost we have all been made one body, and if I have the Holy Ghost, I am brought in, and am united by it. By being sealed, I am joined to the Lord. God puts a testimony of salvation on a man, and we cannot really say what he is until then, even though I may feel sure he is being wrought in by God. Yet he has not his place along with Christ in this world until then. We cannot say a person is saved until God has put His seal upon him. It is baptism into one body, and drinking of one Spirit. They are shades of thought. It reads, “For by one Spirit,” and “for as the body” (v. 12, 13); but the word “for,” in more than

half the cases, is not a connection with what has gone immediately before, but rather a reference back to some great principle.

The body (v. 12) is for eternity, though a person when he dies passes out of the body, as manifested in time; he ceases to be part of that which was formed of God, by the Holy Ghost down here, but in result the whole will be Christ's body. If a person dies, he is like any one on furlough, and forms no actual part of the regiment in active service. We must recollect that the Holy Ghost has come down to earth. Christ, as God, created everything, but that was not His actual existence as when He came, but still He had been working, and had created everything. And so as to the Holy Ghost Christ said, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come." Now, every direct action of God on the creature is by the Spirit: yet He came on the day of Pentecost. Our Lord says, "When he is come," and so on. Of course, when He forms the body, He forms it where He is; but as God He does not give up the person that dies, neither his body, for He has got it all in His hands, and under His eye, to be raised. Even the body is not given up, but it ceases to be in that corporation which the Holy Ghost has formed on earth, If one die, he belongs to the body, and is held to belong to Christ. His body is in the dust, and his spirit is with Christ.

When you get to the "nots" and the "onlys," it is a dangerous thing. If you say, "He is not of the body," naturally you conclude that he did not belong to it at all. If you say, "belongs only down here," you exclude the body for Christ in eternity. If I say, That is in Scripture, I bring my text, and there it is: if I say, "not," then I must know the whole of the scripture to say so. In our

knowledge, negatives are universals, and affirmatives only are particular.

In Ephesians 1, we may notice, Christ is head in title, and not yet: in God's counsels the church is Christ's body, neither present, future, nor past, for it is all in counsel; but here, in Corinthians, it is the actual thing in accomplishment, distinct quite from Ephesians, which is purpose and counsel. And here, too, it is the nature of the thing. Then we have the dependence of the members down here; and it is important to see that all this is down here, because when I read, "He set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets," and so on (v. 28-30), then all this is not in heaven. The apostle says, "in the assembly" (v. 28), so not "in the body," because it is a matter of historical fact. The body is a figure; and he is stating the fact of the realisation of this in the assembly; so that it would not suit so well to say, "He set some in the body."

Verse 25— "The members should have the same care" — proves that all the saints ought to have a care one for another; and that would include every member of the body on earth. "The same care," he says: it is not simply his taking a care for them, but I ought to care for you in the sense of love, and interest and heart being there; it is not "taking care of," but a different idea. We are all one body: my hand is interested in my eye, and my eye in my hand. All are dependent one on another, in spite of themselves, though it ought to be in love.

"Now ye are the body of Christ," v. 27. The local assembly stands as a whole body. You cannot say that the assembly in Corinth was the whole body of Christ, but it was its local expression. You could say the same of

any place. It is all that expresses the truth of the assembly there. A wise master-builder would not know what to do with a ruined house. So, if Paul came down, I do not know to whom he would write now. There is a danger of losing, in a local assembly, the truth of the whole body, and so of having only the representation instead of the reality. I fully recognise that in the principle of meeting this is the only thing that God owns; but in our owning the local thing, I dread losing the whole thing. At Corinth the one answers to the other.

We get an exact list of gifts. The apostle's object was to give the manifestations in the church. Barnabas was an apostle too beside Paul and the twelve. There are different words rendered "gift," and they have shades of meaning. "Gifts" (charisma) (v. 4) is the giving when there is need strictly, and "gift" (dorea) (Eph. 4:7) is the freedom of the gift, and so on. We should look for such gifts as will edify, and desire them. Here they were vain of their tongues; but if you were to talk Chinese, nobody would understand you. You had better seek what will edify; if you prophesy, you will help others. So, if a man desire the office of a bishop, it is a good work.

In our chapter it is power by the Holy Ghost come down; in Ephesians 4 we have Christ as the Head coming for His body. There Christ gives from on high. Here the Holy Ghost comes down, and is distributing. There is capacity as well as gift. In the parable in Matthew 25 our Lord gives to every man according to his several ability. God had formed the vessel for the purpose. In Luke a great deal more is thrown on man's responsibility; in the talents it is more God's grace. In Luke, therefore, you find ten cities and five cities in reward; while in Matthew both are alike, and here "Well done, good and

faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." It is responsibility, and reward according to labour, in Luke.

Some of these gifts have been called sign-gifts, because it is said they were a sign to unbelievers. They were for the inauguration of Christianity, but there is no intimation of their continuance. The church continues, if you take the secret wisdom of God; if you take the revealed statement of God, there is no intimation of remaining here. You will never find the church contemplated as remaining, so as to put off the coming of the Lord. In the parables with reference to it, though we have "After a long time," yet the servants to whom the talents were entrusted are the same as those who are judged; the virgins who slept are they who are roused and so on. So with the seven churches, all was existing then, and yet it has been all going on.

As to the signs, we read, "confirming the word with signs following," as a promise. Moses wrought miracles, and Elijah too, in the midst of apostate Israel. But not so the other prophets. Isaiah and Jeremiah worked no miracles, nor John Baptist. When God is introducing something new, you have them—wherever the thing was to be made good in testimony for our poor hearts to sanction the truth. I see no restoration of miracles, or of anything indeed. There will be miracles at the end on the devil's part: power, and signs, and lying wonders. There was no statement to the church that it must lose them at a certain time, nor that they must go on for a certain time. Some ask as to the continuance of apostles and elders. This was what they said to me in Switzerland: "How can you think of God setting up a church with elders and apostles, and yet making no provision for their continuance?" I said, It is so, because

God did not mean the church to continue. We see this to be the way God used miracles. Of course, He could work a miracle at any time.

It is to be noticed, that, in verse 26, the apostle does not say (though it would be right to say it) that if one member suffer, all the members do suffer with it. God has tempered the body, that it should be so; and I trust it is in measure the case. The realisation of it is diminished by divisions and distances, and all that kind of thing; but do you suppose that, if there is a great work of blessing going on in India or Canada, there is not a blessing, too, in Ireland? Of course there is, as far as living energy goes. The thing is true, though spoiled in a measure. In an assembly where a brother is not walking in the Lord, if the gathering is spiritual, they will feel it, and there will be an immediate consciousness that something is grieving the Spirit. But if my soul is deadened, as you may sometimes see, of course it is not felt so distinctly. If a person cuts my hand, I do not merely say, “Why did you cut my hand?” but my whole body feels it. If an individual were chastened, the assembly feels it in a measure; if they were insensible to it, they would be all the more hardened. The suffering here is any kind of trial, but it applies to chastisement, because we have all one life. It is, by there being one Spirit in it all, that it is so, and it always has a certain effect, though the body may be so divided as to feel it but little. We can be awakened by the work of the Spirit and the word of prayer. If any can apply the word, let them apply it. When there is sin in an assembly, if they judge it, they prove themselves clear; but if they do not, things will get worse, or the Lord deal with them. “Leaven” would apply to both the sin and their refusing to judge it. The

thing the apostle wants in 2 Corinthians is to bring them all into obedience: he says, “When your obedience is fulfilled.” Our own condition is of first importance. We are never independent of the state we are in, or of the Lord’s judgment of it.

“Now ye are body of Christ” (v. 27) is an important principle. The local assembly stands as the body of Christ, for it acts for the whole body, and is recognised as the whole body in a certain sense in its acting. If a person is put out at Belfast, he is put out from the whole body. Suffering affects the whole, though it takes place locally, and action is of the same character in that sense; and then, in verse 24, God hath done “this,” that there should not be a schism in the body; that is, given such provision, though it is seen in individuals in various places. Verse 24 includes all persons who may be exceedingly valuable and yet not appear at all. It does not bring in a question of a schism. There could be no schism in the body itself; but, taking the whole thing, he says God may put honour on one person, and there may be another very quiet with a little gracious word of counsel to the rest, without outward honour put upon him.

In “covet earnestly the best gifts,” the emphasis is on “best,” gifts that edify. The desire should be in the individual and in the assembly. Suppose I felt the assembly wanted teaching, I might earnestly desire to be able to unfold Scripture to them. Gifts belong to the whole body of course, though they may be used locally. Take the highest gift, and apostle, he was not an apostle merely in a particular place. An evangelist is the servant of Christ, not of the assembly; but wherever he may be, he is of the church himself. If there is no assembly

gathered where he is, then he is alone; but if there is an assembly, he is of it. And the first thing in him is to gather to Christ. Say that I go to Galatia, and the Lord converts fifty, they are gathered to Christ, not to the assembly I had come from. An evangelist would be for the edifying of the body of Christ, inasmuch as he brings the souls in and adds them. How could you build up a church without people, without bricks (or scripturally I should say, “stones”)? I should in this connection be jealous of two things exceedingly: of a person separating himself in spirit from the saints; or of the assembly thinking his work was their affair. I think it is of great importance that the workman should be clearly Christ’s servant; but if he works in any spirit of separation from the saints, I could not go with it. An evangelist may not necessarily gather to anything that was there but to Christ, with a full knowledge of redemption; and having Christ and a full knowledge of redemption, they could not go on with anything else.

Now-a-days the great thought commonly even among Christians is the conversion of souls to go to heaven; then (in Paul’s time) there was no thought of anything but the church, and converts went in as a matter of course. One is thankful where there is now any better sense; one hears of souls converted all over England and small gatherings springing up. Bringing converts to a full knowledge of redemption does not always bring them unto the ground of Christ: anybody that has a pastor’s heart and power should look after such. Paul himself was more than an evangelist merely, but he gets Timotheus, Silas, etc., to go and visit these places where he had laboured, and see how they were going on. Paul wanted Apollos to go to Corinth (1 Cor. 16:12); but from

a beautiful feehng Apollos would not go, for they were saying, “I of Paul, and I of Apollos.” Paul had no jealousy, and wished him to go; but Apollos feared the effect of it, and would not. In the time of a revival I said to S. in Kingstown, What are you going to do with all these converts? He said, The Lord will take care of them. The result was that it all died out. I do not think this was the case with our brethren in France; when they were blessed, they stayed and gathered the converts to the table. The nearest local assembly may be a long way off. I think there is responsibility on all the church of God.

This does not really confound gifts with assemblies. The assembly would not act collectively merely, though it would have fellowship with labourers. When Paul laid hands on any to give him a gift, he was glad to have the testimony of the elders with his own. As to elders themselves, the apostles chose elders, but it is not said that hands were laid on them, yet I believe it was so. He says, “Lay hands suddenly on no man,” but does not state that it refers to elders. Remember all this is very different from “gift.”

I do not want to leave the thought as to the care of souls that are converted. If you look at a pastor, you see in his very expression a difference from an evangelist. An evangelist will say, “O Lord, look at these poor sinners”; and a true pastor will say, “O Lord, look at these poor sheep.” There is this point too: the character of revival preaching does not tend so much to gather together perhaps, though having a measure of excitement in it; and souls so converted have no thought of being gathered, and it is very difficult in a revival work to bring souls into a condition to receive further teaching. I remember an expression of one who “wanted a sermon

to pull him up." There is dear—— whose preaching is exciting, but finds the converts who get a taste for worship go elsewhere, and those remain who want the exciting preaching. But there is a kind of looking after people that I should not give in to. You cannot follow into ways which cultivate a thing that is not according to God. It is an anxious thing when souls are brought in; an evangelist will not be careless about his converts, but then his special work occupies him. I believe there is many a gift that is not developed from want of devotedness.

Chapter 13.

In the beginning of chapter 12 the apostle supposes all manner of gifts, but no grace. (This is of moment, too, in the opening of Hebrews 6.) A person may have the faith here spoken of without reality. He is talking of faith to remove mountains, not of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ's person. We find power and grace constantly distinguished. We find the power and not the grace in the Old Testament, in such an one as Balaam for instance, but not exactly such instances in the New Testament: there we find Judas rather.

We have a blessed description of love in this chapter. "God is love." It is sovereign goodness, coming out of itself. It goes beyond "The love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." It is the same love, but here it is in its different characters. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity (love), it profiteth me nothing." It is not a definition, but the way love works. But what we find here is divine love in the world; which is such a different thing from law. It is what is above all

the evil that is round it, and therefore can feel for all the evil; love is affected, but never touched in itself by it. That is what I see in its working. So we see Christ going through this world. Love is a sovereign thing. There are two kinds of love, both divine: a downward love which is sovereign in its nature—God really—which is in our hearts in a certain sense through the Holy Ghost; and then I find another which goes upward, and there is a holy affection to which I am subject. We find an analogy to it in husband and wife. Thus, where divine love is working in my heart towards others, it goes downwards; but when I get the state of my soul, I must look up and I am subject. In "walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and given Himself for us," we have divine love. This is the giving up of myself altogether; and then I get to God, who is the object. And therefore it is said that we are light, but it is never said that we are love, because love is sovereign, and we cannot say we are that.

In our chapter we have love in the character of the Spirit of Christ working us. I must have a power that is above all the evil that is around me, and yet walk in graciousness through it all; and this is the reason the love of the law would not do for this world. If I love my neighbour as myself, it is not enough for a world of evil; there I must have a love that can go on, and be superior to all the evil, and this is what Christ was. It can feel all the evil too. Having no self in it, it has no self roused by all the evil that is around, and therefore it can feel for the people that are there. It "suffereth long," that is downward; it "seeketh not her own" —downward too. It is not merely that it delights in God, and in what is blessed here, but it is looking around in the midst of evil and selfishness.

“Rejoicing with the truth” (as it reads in the margin). It is in the truth, no doubt. The truth is there, and I rejoice with it, and take delight in it. Suppose the truth is being preached; my heart goes with it, and is delighted.

“Believeth all things” is not being suspicious: one believes readily. It “hopeth all things”; it does not mean ill, it does not think of evil. Evil tends to depress the soul, but God is above all that. I find constantly the danger of thinking the evil is greater than the good; but if I bring in God, He is greater than all opposed. Christ was here in the world with no thought of suspicion, and that is the spirit in which we are to walk through the world. If you are always suspecting people, who will trust you? I feel the great difficulty in seeing the evil, which is apt to get the upper hand of your mind; though it is no good deluding oneself that it is not there, because it is there. But love will go on in heaven when there is no evil to think about; prophecies will fail, tongues cease, and knowledge vanish away. “When that which is perfect is come” (v. 10) means the time of glory, when everything is perfect, and these partial things will have ceased. Knowledge now is in degree, “we know in part”; all that kind of learning will pass away. Learning is a proof of ignorance, and this will not be then. Even in divine things we learn, and all that is testimony to ignorance. It gives a great idea of the littleness of man in that way. All these partial instruments of communicating will be done with when I know as I am known: which is, I believe, God’s way of knowing; it is not knowing in part; it is not so much the measure as the manner of God’s knowing. God can create ideas. I know so far as things are knowable to be known. Now we see “darkly “what we do not see clearly. It is just as I

see through a window, instead of seeing the object at once. It is an extraordinary expression; we do not see clearly, but in a mystery, not like plain open things. It is an enigma, though I do not like that word, because it does not suit divine things.

“Faith, hope, and charity,” or love, are not put accidentally here. They are the three things that are characteristic of the Christian state now, “putting on the breastplate of faith and charity [the same word], and for a helmet the hope of salvation,” 1 Thess. 5:8. Some ten times in the New Testament faith, hope, and love are put together. They are positive elements, faith and hope referring to the present state I am in, and charity to the present and eternal state. Faith lays hold of an object, and hope desires it. The word “charity” is an ecclesiastical word. Love is really what God is. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and this never fails. When we possess a thing, we have done with faith and hope as to it: they have passed into positive fruition, as we say. There will be love in heaven, but we shall not have faith there, because there will be sight; and we shall not have hope there, because we have got possession. “Now abideth” shews the three as present things, but charity never fails.

Chapter 14.

In this chapter the apostle is referring to these tongues which shall cease; the Corinthians were vain of them; and he says they are not to use them save conditionally.

Verse 3 is the way in which prophecy works, rather than a definition of prophecy. It is speaking unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. It can be now, of course, in that way; knowledge and doctrine abide,

though the giving forth of revelation does not, because all is revealed (that is, in the word). We speak of revelation in a lower sense, when anyone gets something he had not before; but then that is only what is already in the word. It is not so much here a question as to the character of the prophecy, but he contrasts the prophesying with tongues, when no one understood them; and it is as regards those who are within, not those who are without.

In “I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also” (v. 15), suppose I was praying, and did not understand what I was saying, what good would there be in that? In “my spirit prayeth,” it is just as it might be in a groan that could not be uttered. The tongues, in a sense, superseded the confusion of tongues. Instead of grace confining itself to Israel, the gift of tongues opened it up to all nations. We see a specimen of it in Acts 2; it reversed Babel, as it were. Only on the day of Pentecost it was all plain and simple; but now the Corinthians were abusing it. The moment it was given, it was for all the nations in carrying the gospel to them.

The saying Amen, in verse 16, is general, I think; it would include the Lord’s supper too. But if some prayed in Dutch or Persian, nobody here, at least, could say, Amen. A very wonderful thing were the tongues. There is little difference between “when ye come together in the church,” in chapter 11:18, and “the whole church be come together into some place,” in chapter 14:23. It may be more emphatic in chapter 14, that is all. The way the difference at all comes about is in chapter 11; it is the character of their coming together, in assembly; here is the whole assembly come together. The one is a

character; the other is a thing. The “unlearned” persons (v. 23) are those not taught in the word. This is true of an unbeliever, but we have the unbelievers named also. The word is “idiotes,” and a person not instructed in an art was called such; a private person. It makes two classes, the untaught in the things of God, and the actual unbeliever. There were no catechumens at that time. When the catechumen was first invented, they were allowed to hear the first exhortations; and when the church part came on, they were all sent out. That is the origin of the word mass, from ‘Ite: missa est.’29 In thinking of the one who was “convinced of all, and judged of all” (v. 24), we must remember how instruction was obtained; Peter and John were not taught as Rabbis were. They had not rabbinical instruction, though this was much esteemed of course. How many poor people now will say, If a man is not a clergyman, how can he know anything about it? That would be the feeling. Such a one, convinced and judged, will “worship.” Because he finds God working thus, and falls down and owns Him. The presence of God acts upon his spirit, and bows it; and his conscience is reached. The secrets of his heart are told out to himself. God’s presence finds it all out to himself, without his speaking to others. It is the power of the Spirit of God on a man’s conscience.

In verse 25 “God is in you” is collective. Ev is used for “among” and “in,” when the noun is collective. “In you” is perhaps better, because it looks at the assembly as a whole. Verse 26 does not imply a censure, nor that the things were all looked out ready. He speaks of a revelation, and this could not be a cut and dried thing. But they were abusing the power of the Holy Ghost:

there was no order. Verse 30 is merely the general spirit of subjection. But now there is no revelation. I do not think one was to wait30 till another had done; order is before power. God is never the author of confusion. Verse 32 teaches that the moral power is superior to mere power. The “tongue” is subject to me, as we said before. Whatever I might have in power, if it were spiritual wisdom not to speak, I should not speak. The moral judgment of the prophet is superior to mere power, however real and mighty. Verse 34 is the tenor of the law, if not a particular law. The apostle is peremptory about it in Timothy. “I suffer not a woman to teach,” he says. I think it is a little out of place for a woman even to raise a hymn; but I do not object, if she do it modestly. If three women were on a desert island, I do not see why they should not break bread together, if they did it privately. A man and his wife being alone, I see no objection to their breaking bread, if they themselves feel free and are disposed.

Chapters 12 and 14 are separated by a chapter on love. Charity comes in, by the bye, in the middle, to teach them how to use their gifts. He brings in love too, as the root of all right action, as of everything else; and then he goes on to the order and exercise of gift. We have the doctrine in chapter-12, and the exercise of gifts in chapter 14. There is no law as to the order of the morning meeting. If a person had a word to say before the breaking of bread, I should not object; but I enjoy prominence given to the breaking of bread on the Lord’s day morning.

Chapter 15.

The apostle now speaks of resurrection. His keeping it till the last, in this way, is remarkable. We have a great truth brought out in the chapter, in the total identification of Christ with men—saints, but man as man, because he says, if men do not rise, Christ is not risen. I have not the least objection to verse 22 as it stands in the English Version, for all the wicked will be raised, as well as the righteous. As in Adam everybody in Adam dies, so in Christ all in Christ will be made alive. Verse 21 is more general; it is merely the fact that resurrection comes by man. You could only say “in Christ” of the wicked, if you take it in the power of Christ. The whole account is the resurrection of the saints. When you take in resurrection of the dead, it is abstract, and it is resurrection that is insisted on.

The destruction of death, if you take it for the wicked, will be the second death. The wages of sin is death in general, but strictly the first death; though wrath of God from heaven is revealed along with the gospel. I know of no scripture that speaks of Christ bearing the second death. He bore what brings us into it. It is a great thing to keep to Scripture. “The lake of fire,” “the second death,” is not annihilation.

You must recollect that all that is behind death is fully brought out on either side by the gospel. The Pharisees spelled out something of resurrection, but life and incorruptibility are brought to light by the gospel. In the Old Testament eternal life is mentioned but twice, and both times in connection with the millennium; and in the judgment on Adam there is no judgment beyond death—“dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return” —that is

all. Of course, when God was driving out the man, the woman was to have sorrow in her conception, and so on; and plenty more comes out in the other scriptures; but as for the present state, death of the body was what was imposed on him as the consequence. There were other intimations in the Old Testament, whence the Pharisees had gathered the truth, but it was a matter of spiritual apprehension. All the Old Testament saints will be in the resurrection, though I do not know that they are included in this scripture. “They without us shall not be made perfect.”

The resurrection of Christ from among the dead is the testimony to God’s acceptance of those that are raised. It is merely a question of time. If the dead are raised altogether, then they are all to come together into judgment. But God takes Christ out—the seal of His perfect acceptance—from the rest of the dead; and when the time comes, we shall be taken out from the dead in just the same manner. God does raise the wicked, and Christ will judge the wicked, and then He will give all up to God.

There is a passage in Philippians 3 as to the resurrection, which makes it simple about the body: “Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” It is wonderful what revelations we have of the plans of God, compared with the darkness of man! Romans 8:11 also refers to resurrection— “shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

In our chapter two things are evident: one that is always our portion in spirit, that is, the time when the dispensation and ordering of things will cease; and the other, the actual having to say to God, “He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.” There is the whole system of dispensed power which comes in by-and-by; and then you get God all in all, when all mediatorial provision to bring it about is complete, and He will render up the kingdom to God. In one sense we reign for ever and ever, but all the governmental system that brings the thing about will be closed.

The apostle John does not give dispensations, but deals more immediately with natures; what he does is evidently the bringing out the manifestation of God. “No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” “If we walk in the light, as God is in the light,” and so on; it is the revelation of God’s nature.

But here it is all a system of counsels and power, which is, in a. certain sense, provisional, and so only for a time. The object is, that God—not the Father—may be all in all. And there comes a blessed fact with it, that the Lord Jesus never gives up His manhood; “then shall the Son also himself be subject.” You have the sonship in John most fully. Christ was God, and came to be a servant, presently to take the government, and all authority and power is put down, and then He takes the place of subjection, and all as man. It is not that He is not God, for He is God all the time. His divinity comes out in John at every step. He is never as a mere man in John’s Gospel; yet He never goes out of the place of a person that receives everything. He has taken the form of a servant, and says, “I have glorified thee on earth,” and

now “glorify thou me.” He does not say, I glorify Myself. And again, “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him; if God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.” In John 17 He speaks as Son of God; “Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. As thou hast given him power over ail flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”

It is beautiful to see Him God, but man, all through that Gospel! That is just what Satan tried to get Him out of down here; but no, if Satan says “Give up your place as a servant,” He says, “That is where I am now come.” Nor does He ever cease to be the firstborn among many brethren, and that is a wonderful thing to us. But you never find the glory of His person touched, however much He comes amongst us, and at His baptism by John, He quite takes His place as a man. Of course, there was no need for Himself to be baptised with the baptism of repentance; but in grace He takes the place with those who did need it; whereon immediately heaven is opened to Him, and the Holy Ghost comes down, and He is sealed and anointed by the Holy Ghost. If the Father owns Him as His Son, there also He takes His place with us.

When heaven is opened to Stephen, at once we see the difference. Stephen has an object in heaven which he is looking at, and which forms him into the same image. But when heaven is opened to Christ, heaven is looking down at Him, not He at an object there. And so the glory of His Person is always secured. In the transfiguration

He was in exactly the same glory as Moses and Elias, and they were as He; but, the moment the glory comes out and the Father's voice is heard, Moses and Elias are gone. Even where His saints are in the same place with Him, the glory of His Person is completely secured. It was so at the transfiguration, as well as at His baptism. And the nearer we are to Christ, the more we shall see the glory of His Person. It is blessed to see this. He still remains the firstborn among many brethren. If it were only an angel, there would not be much in it.

Psalm 8 will be made good at the beginning of the millennium. His enemies will be made His footstool according to Psalm no, but the same general sense. He is sitting at His Father's right hand now, but when His Father makes His enemies His footstool, then He begins to trample them down. In Psalm 8 He gets this power, and is set over the works of His hand. He has three distinct titles to this place over all things: He created them in Colossians, and therefore is Head over all things; then, in Colossians and Hebrews, He takes it as Son, because, if He is Son, He is heir; and then there is a third title, as Son of man He takes it to Himself, but in the way of doing it, He takes it in redemption: God reconciles everything by Him. The full result of Psalm 8 will not be reached until death is destroyed. God puts all things under His feet as Son of man at the beginning of the millennium, and then He begins to put them down, and, when all is done, He gives the kingdom up. The kingdom of heaven is going on now; not the kingdom of the Son of man, though He is King, and entitled to take the kingdom at any time. He is ready to judge both quick and dead; only He is sitting there till the moment, known to God, when He is to take the kingdom

manifestly, and in actual execution. Now it is all a provisional state. He is sitting on the Father's throne, and has not taken His own at all; still the kingdom belongs to Him; only it is going on as in the parables of Matthew 13, a kingdom without a king, in patience, not power. This is not a kingdom in the literal sense, but the shape the kingdom takes before the King takes His power, though He is King.

The destruction of death Will not be until the great white throne. The taking of the kingdom will be a total change in the order of things; but the great difference will be, that (instead of a rejected Christ, and the Holy Ghost giving power to go against the stream) when the Lord comes, the stream is in the way of righteousness: power and glory, and everything, are in the way of righteousness. Now people have to make sacrifices; if they follow Christ, they have their cross. Only He is excepted who did put all things under Him: otherwise it is all without exception. We have it in Psalm 8, and quoted in three places—Ephesians 1:22, Hebrews 2, and this chapter. It is more developed in Hebrews 2; it says, we see not yet all things put under Him. Half the psalm is fulfilled, but not yet the other half. He is crowned with glory and honour, but we do not see everything put under His feet, and there He sits on the Father's throne. In Ephesians He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is His body. In Psalm 2 we have Him as Son of God and King of Israel down in the earth: only He is rejected, and then we have the state His rejection leaves the Jews in, until Psalm 8, when we have everything put under Him. We find the Messiah's glory and title set aside for a time, when those who followed with Him are in trial and

difficulty; and then Jehovah's name is excellent in all the earth, when the Son of man is set over everything, and this is seen in Psalm 8.

That gives the whole scheme of God's ways in Christ, not the church, but as to the earth. In the end of John 1 Christ is owned according to Psalm 2, "the Son of God and King of Israel." And Christ says, You shall see greater things than these—the Son of man on the throne. And then, in John 2, we have the millennium settled among the Jews on earth, the water of purifying turned into the joy of earth at the marriage, and with a scourge of small cords He purges the temple. Those are the two sides of the millennial character, and that is why it is called the third day. You cannot make anything of those days in John, if you do not see it is the remnant up to Nathaniel. The history, in fact, has many days; but the days taken notice of are John Baptist's ministry, Christ's, and then the third day. It is just the same at the end of John: this is the third time that Jesus shewed Himself, and that third time is the millennium. It is meant to be mysterious, and it is so. The first time He sent His disciples for a haul (Luke 5:6), the net brake; but now, when the Lord comes back again, the net did not break, although there were so many fishes (153). It is purposely mysterious, I do not doubt. There had been the revelation to Thomas before; and He had shewn Himself eight days before that. This was the third time, when He gathers them at the end. Paul's ministry is entirely left out here, but we have Peter and John's ministries:—Peter's, to feed the sheep; and, as for John, the Lord says, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me "; and this is what John did; he goes watching over the church until Christ come.

In our Lord's speaking with Peter (John 21), two words are used: phileo (I am attached) is more intimate, agapao (I love) is more general. Peter says, I love you with the intimacy of a friend. It is curious, that, though the verb phileo is used, the noun from it is never used in the Greek. The Lord uses the general word first, and probes his heart; and then again, "Lovest thou me?" and the third time He says, "Affectionest thou me?" "I not only love you," says Peter, "but have affection for you." I think there is great instruction there. The Lord never reproaches Peter, but goes to detect the root that had produced the fault: and Peter is not really restored until he had judged the root. I do not mean that he may not have confessed it honestly, but he is in danger of the same again. The moment he had been put to the test, he did not know the Lord at all, and nothing but divine knowledge could have said that he loved Him. Divine knowledge could say all things; and then, when the Lord has completely humbled him, He puts entire confidence in him: "Feed my sheep." The very thing Christ loves most on this earth He trusts to this man. It was a complete destruction of Peter's self-confidence, and then he knew what the resource for a poor sheep was: since he had judged himself thoroughly, he knew where to take the sheep. The Lord never can trust anybody that trusts himself. It is not that a person is not sincere. Peter was perfectly sincere, but he did not know himself.

Then the Lord, we may say, leaps over to His coming. Then there was another thing as to Peter I may mention — He puts an end to his will. Peter had declared he would follow Him to prison and to death—the thing he could not do. If only a servant girl asks him, "Are you one of them?" he is afraid, and begins to curse and

swear. The Lord now says, “When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he signifying by what death he should glorify God.” ‘When your will is gone, you will follow Me.’ The very thing he said he would do, and could not, because he trusted the flesh, that thing, when he had no confidence of his own, was what he would do, and really did so. It was a thorough breaking down of the flesh, and then Christ trusts all to him, both His sheep and His lambs. There is a difference there: first, “Feed my lambs”; then, “Shepherd my sheep”; and then, “Feed my sheep.” “Shepherd,” in that way, is sometimes important; the elders are called on to shepherd the flock; the Greek word means not to feed merely, but to care for and watch over them. We have no ascension here; all passes over to Christ’s coming: we have nothing of Paul, but only Peter and John; Peter, the apostle of the circumcision, and John’s ministry going on till the Lord came.

To return to our chapter. It may be remarked that the baptism for the dead, in verse 29, means, that you take your part with the dead, and for the dead, whether it be Christ, or anybody else. It is a very old thought. Doddridge had it two hundred years ago; he says, Here’s a man who has fallen in the ranks, and another steps forward in his stead; what is the good of that, if nobody rises?

“I die daily” (v. 31) is an outward thing. The difference of the glories is, I believe, between the heavenly and the earthly. “So also is the resurrection of the dead” —the state of the resurrection is more glorious than the state

down here. All that is told of the first resurrection is testimony against the entire idea of taking people to judgment in the way the evangelical system does. “We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ” —be manifested there—that must be, but the saints are in glory before they arrive there: therefore the idea of a judgment, whether they are to have the place or not, is altogether too low. The real power of redemption has been lost sight of, and the resurrection itself is the fruit of that redemption. Just as Christ Himself was taken from among the dead (besides, He “could not be holden of it”) by the glory of the Father owning Him in righteousness as Son, so the saints will be taken out too. But there the resurrection was putting the seal of acceptance publicly upon Christ’s whole work; and everything is settled. Whereas, also, if the saints alone are raised, and taken out from among the wicked dead presently, it too is a positive testimony to their acceptance.

In Mark Christ told them, after the transfiguration, to tell no man until after He should be risen “from among the dead.” The disciples were wondering what this rising from the dead should mean; that was what astonished them. Every Pharisee in the country believed there would be a resurrection; but a rising out from among the dead they could not make anything of. The whole idea of a judgment to come to settle a person’s case seems to me to upset all Christianity. Paul has been eighteen hundred years in heaven, and you are going to take him out to judge whether he is to be there or not! It is absurd upon the face of it. People fancy that the testimony to the fulness of redemption weakens morality: nay, but the fulness is in Christ, and being in

Christ I also see that Christ is in me. Then if Christ is in you, let us never see anything but Christ in your ways' every day. All duties flow from the place we are in already. You could not have the duties of children to me if you are not my children, nor could you, if you slaved yourselves to death, become my children. But if you were my children, you would have the duty of living as such. A woman cannot act as the wife of a man, if she is not his wife, and so on. But then the duty is there if the relation is. Are you sure of being saved for ever? asks one. Well, is that my child? Yes; then he is my child for ever. God gives a ground for all action, but it is not duties and conditional promises: you cannot have a duty without first putting a person in the place it belongs to. And then God gives a new nature that delights in the duty, whereon He sets you to do it.

But I was alluding to the fact that we are raised in glory, and surely, if we are there, the question of judging whether we are to be there is all nonsense. And so the first resurrection is not merely a notion about some high-flown thing. "Some have not the knowledge of God"; for this denying the resurrection was connected really with a moral state; there was no real knowledge of God. A Christian might have fallen into such a state, but the knowledge of God is that revelation of God to the soul which is estimated by the new nature, and is the spring of all acquaintance with truth. A saint may fall into such a state, for the flesh in the saint is as bad as in the sinner, or worse. Paul here states the fact, "some have not the knowledge of God," just as we were saying, the other day, a man asleep is, as regards others, just the same as a dead man. Some needed the exhortation, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead."

Such are thinking after the flesh, instead of thinking after Christ, though before God not really in the flesh.

The knowledge of God is immensely important; if I have not light, I do not know what light is; the knowledge of a being flows from partaking of the nature of that being. An animal does not know what a man is, though there may be greater men, and stronger men, and wiser, than myself. Hence “he that loveth not, knoweth not God.” If God is love, and I have got His nature, then I know He is, and what He is. But there are some people who have not the knowledge of God. As I said, you must have the nature of a being to know that being; and now I know what God is, because I have been made partaker of the divine nature, or else I had not the knowledge of God. “We “walk in the light, as God is in the light, and that was the difference between Israel and Christians. God was behind a veil to them, but now He has come out in Christ, and that veil is rent, and we come in. And so now the wrath of God is revealed from heaven; that is not the government of God sending the people to Babylon, or elsewhere, but wrath in full, or else there must be no “ungodliness.” And the death that rent the veil, and let God out, put away the evil that kept us outside. Of old they might have learned at least some of God’s ways: for “He shewed his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel”; that is, if they were spiritual. Moses says, “Shew me thy way, that I may know thee.” That was something of it, but the Christian, properly speaking, knows God. Galatians 4:8 gives you, “When ye knew not God,” and then, “After that ye have known God.” There is a moral estimate of what God is. If I find a ritualist, I say, You do not know God, you could not, as long as you bow down your head like a bulrush, as

Isaiah says (chap. 58:5), and think God can be worshipped by all these mummeries; you do not know God really.

Those in 2 Peter 3, who were “entangled” and “overcome,” had known Christ in a superficial way; there was no real change of life, no vital change, only an outward change through the knowledge brought to them, but, as the old saying is, “A washed sow is no sheep.” It takes a new nature really to know God. Knowing Christ may be a little different from knowing God; knowing God is knowing His nature, whereas Christ has come, and there might, in another way, be such and such a knowledge of Him. Without knowledge of God, you may get your feelings moved about the truth. Look at Balaam. He can say, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his”; but there was no change as to his life, or anything. There may be such now, with no real knowledge of Christ. The outward manifestation of Christ may have come to a person, without any knowledge of what was inside. “When they knew God,” in Romans 1, was the knowledge of God as in Noah, the preacher of righteousness; but they turned that into idolatry. They knew there was only one God in Noah’s time, and they gave that up for idols. In one sense you may know everything, if you merely take the acquaintance with it. In Romans Paul is convicting the Gentiles on two grounds—their knowledge of God as in Noah, and on the ground of the creation-glory of God. The starting-point of the Gentiles was the knowledge of God, and they did not like to retain Him in their knowledge; that is the way they lost it, because the human mind, in a moral sense, cannot hold it. It is ginosko in Greek, in “After that ye

have known God." It is the word constantly used in such a connection. The word epiginosko is more, it is consciously to know. He says of the Corinthians, they were ignorant of God; I think the knowing of God, in Romans, is a little more, because they had knowledge, for they started from a point, and it was abandoned.

Now we have another very important thing, "The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit," etc. (v. 45-48). As we were like Adam, we shall be like Christ. There are many important things here. "The second Man" is the first truth; that is, we have no acceptance of the first man at all; we have acceptance of people, of course, but that is in the second Man, not in the first. God's thought is to bring in a second Adam, and the first is set aside; and as the first Adam was a head and centre, the second Adam is looked at as a head Man, and in a far higher way. In many places people think there is a great deal going on towards perfecting man, but, instead of that, Christ sets him on one side. Christ was "the last Adam "before He rose as to His Person, but not as to His state. Adam was so in the garden, in his person, in paradise, but was not exactly head of a race until he was outside; and this has its importance. So Christ was not Head of a race really until He had died and risen, because He died. Christ comes among men down here, and men will not have Him, but in His death their system is totally closed. Another man is set up: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Man rejected Christ, and that finished man's history. When Christ has risen, He begins a new state altogether, but it is in the last Adam. He is the last Adam; there could be no other after Him.

“Adam,” in contrast with “man,” is looked at more as the head of a race. Then notice the enormous difference between the two Adams. The first was a living soul, the second a life-giving Spirit. This is the very thing those who deny the immortality of the soul insist on, for they say animals were living souls, and so they were. But we know that after death comes judgment (Heb. 9:8), and that single text shews that after death the whole question comes in of judgment for what a man did when he was alive. These people talk of Hebrew and Greek about it (that is, one of their chief people, and one may say several), but he only proved that he knew nothing about the language, and could not even look out words in his dictionary; and yet it raises a cloud of dust. God had quickened Christ, but Christ is a quickener both of soul and body, and that is the way there is a spiritual body. Christ was born of a woman, “made of a woman,” it says, “made under the law.” “Made” is not the thing, but it is a word that signifies, “to begin to be,” and that was not before; because “under the law” would not do. I could say, He became a man, but I could not say, became of a woman. “Became,” in English, supposes a person to exist already, and then to become something, which is not the case here. And “was made “does not do, because it looks as if He was made what He was not before. Christ was always a quickening Spirit—He quickened from Adam. It is the contrast between the first Adam and last; the one received life, the other gives life; and then we shall be like Him who is from heaven.

As to soul and spirit, spirit is the upper part, and life was communicated to the body through it. Soul, when you make the difference, is that which you have in common with the beasts. The word is used in the Hebrew for

everything; conscience, soul, spirit, and heart. Heart thus is really a figure, for else it is a piece of my flesh connected with the circulation of the blood. Take “if our heart condemn us not,” there it is in the sense of conscience: “Love God with all thy heart,” there it is the affections.

The “earth,” in verse 47, is the ground the man is made of. I think we have to recollect that, in divine things, the force of words is known by the meaning of the thing. It is not so in human science, but the opposite. Our Lord asks, “Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my words.” Nicodemus shews what this is when he asks, “How can a man be born again?” It is of the first importance to lay hold of what the Lord is speaking, though we might learn Greek too; it is all well in its place. “We have borne the image of the earthy, and shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”

When we learn that “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump,” we shall be changed. The last trump, among the Romans, was the signal for all to start from the camp. They sounded one trumpet, and pulled down their tents; then a second, and put themselves in order; and when the last was sounded, they all started. It is the same idea in 1 Thessalonians 4; it is there the military technical shout when they were all called into the rank again from standing at ease (originally it was the sound given to the rowers to pull together). We have three there: the Lord first; then the archangel carrying it on; and then the trump of God that completes all. “Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory; O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God

which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Yes, "the strength of sin is the law." It is astonishing the way people cling to the law for morality. I know nothing that shews more the perversity of man's mind than this. It is clear enough. "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law, but under grace." To put under law is to bring in sin, for you cannot keep it, and so it is "the strength of sin." The motions of sin were by the law. Law addresses itself to a nature, and forbids the sin, without changing the nature, or anything else; and it enfeebles the whole spirit of a man, by bringing his conscience into bondage. Indeed sin takes occasion by the commandment. If in this table, now, I had a drawer, and something in it, and I said, "Nobody is to know what is there," why, there are lots of heads in this room would be curious to know what it was directly. And the law is "the strength of sin," by binding the soul down to guilt: not that this is a fault in the law, but because of what my nature is, law does provoke. And then, besides, it ties the guilt down on the conscience. Law gives no life, no power, no object, but it provokes the lust, is the occasion of sin, and fixes my guilt upon me. Christ gives me an object, and life, and power, and delivers me from all that was against me. The law tells me to love God, and I ask, Why so? I have no nature that does. It states the duty, without acting on the person's heart one atom, but the sin that is committed it ties down upon the conscience. And it is very useful to tie sins down upon the conscience, but that is all it is useful for. Where Paul says, "Touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless," in Philippians 3, it was outwardly true: but he says in Romans 7, "We know that the law is spiritual,"

which is another thing. In Philippians he alludes to sins; so with the ruler, who says, “All these things have I kept from my youth up.” But the Lord tests him with, “Go and sell all that thou hast,” and that will not do for man.

The moment of the rapture (v. 54) is not in the scope of the prophets, and Paul merely states the fact without time. In Isaiah 25 we have the Gentiles brought in, and the Jews restored, and he puts the fact of the resurrection in without the precise order of events. The testimony of the Lord’s coming is striking, for it is when He comes the first resurrection takes place. I say this, because it is considered to be a kind of bit of superior knowledge. 1 Thessalonians 4 gives it. There are two classes taken up, and they will be setting on the thrones of judgment, but it does not say exactly when.

Chapter 16.

We have in verse 8 an important principle as to work. There are many adversaries, but a great and effectual door is opened to me, and so I will stay. It is a very different thing to have the door closed, and to have many adversaries. We shall soon find out when the door is closed. I think it requires patience; and you may find amazing opposition. I remember only two people coming, for eight weeks at one place where everything was against me, but at the end of that time forty or fifty came in, and several were converted. At another place, where all was for me, even the clergyman, it all came to nothing. The highest leading is direct leading by the Spirit of God. I do not say we have that now as Paul had it; but there is being guided by His eye, while, too, it is a great mercy to be held in by bit and bridle. Take the fact that Paul and Silas were going to Bithynia (Acts 16),

“but the Spirit suffered them not.” Then they were called over to Macedonia; and this was positive direct guidance as to where they were to work: and Paul went afterwards to Ephesus, and stayed there a couple of years, and all Asia heard the word of God. I believe the Lord might now put it upon a person’s heart to go to a particular place. I remember once going to Cork, and could not tell why I went, and there was great blessing. It is better for evangelists to go two and two, but it is difficult to get enough for it. We lean but little on the power of the Spirit of God. We have a network of railways, and use them, but Paul did his work on foot, and did a great deal more work too than we do. I use a railroad, of course, but if one can go on foot, it would be a deal better.

In verse 15 I see the Lord providing spiritual authority: “they addicted themselves”; it is the word for appointing officers to a regiment. It is not an official authority, but an action on the conscience of the person—it is a moral authority, and not official. They were not teaching, but they were serving the saints, and acquired a just and happy influence over them: and wherever an assembly is going on well, and there is a number there, there will be something of this kind. In Switzerland we were very much opposed about ministry, but they failed in their scheme. To get something we had not, they chose elders, saying Luther sanctioned them. One of them came to me, and said, “I am an elder.”

I said, “Suppose I am unruly; what will you do? “

“Why, I will come and visit you.”

“Well, you are here now: what have you to say to me?”

“Why, I am an elder.”

“Who made you an elder?”

“I was chosen an elder.”

“But I did not choose you.”

And, quite confused, he had to own, “I cannot be an elder to one who did not choose me.”

“And do you think unruly people will own you, even if they did choose you? Not they.”

28 See New Translation, “beloved in God the Father.”

29 The formula of dismissal by the officiating minister.

30 ‘speak.’

Notes Of Readings On 2 Corinthians

Chapter 1.

Paul was at Ephesus, intending to go to Corinth, but they were in such a bad state there that he could not go, but he wrote a letter, and then went up from Ephesus to Troas, in hope to meet Titus with an answer to his letter. He went into Macedonia, met Titus, and wrote them the second letter, now that his heart could open out more upon blessing. He could go farther on in the truth now, though they were still babes, yet he could lead them on.

Paul could go much nearer to Ephesian truth here, and we have the basis of that in a verse or two, though he does not enter into it as the unfolding of God's counsels. As regards the person of the Christian, it is, "If one died for all, then were all dead"; that is Ephesian truth as a basis in the individual. "Bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus "is Roman truth, which is much beyond the first epistle; but his mouth is opened and enlarged. In Ephesians he gives the counsels of God, but here he can take the foundation in Christians. And here there was another thing had happened which gave occasion to this; he had gone through the terrible persecutions at Ephesus when the town clerk dismissed the assembly (and he seems, indeed, to have gone farther than we have details of in Acts), so that he despaired of his life. He had been through this which had brought him to the point of all that he sets out in the second epistle—that life was in God who raised the dead, and the flesh was dead. That is Roman truth—dead with Christ; but there are two ways in which men are looked at—as living in sins, or living to sin, if you

please; and on the other hand as dead in sins. It is the same state, but in two different aspects. If I look at a man living in his lusts and pleasures, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, then he is both living in sins and dead to God. I may take him up on either side, and say, You are a living man in sins, and you must die: or I may take him up as dead in sins, and say, Life is God's gift; and without it you cannot enjoy Him, or know Him, for you are dead. Death is brought to a living man in sin, and the new creature to a man that is dead. If the man is dead, as in Ephesians, we have all the counsels of God, a totally new creation of everything else, and of the man too, and that is here in Corinthians, not merely "he is a new creature" but there is (that is, the whole thing is) a new creation. You have the man practically realising death, and also as already dead, and the new creation brought in.

What I have indicated is the main thought of the epistle, and then we hear afterwards about collections of money. It is addressed more specifically to the saints. In the first epistle there is instruction for the whole of professing Christendom, and governmental directions how to get on. Here he is thinking of the saints, and opens his heart: it is to the saints which are in all Achaia, where Corinth was situated. The word "saints" looks at them as to their standing. Sanctified of the Spirit is always assumed to be a real thing, although there may be a false person amongst those so spoken of. I do not think the word "saint" is ever used, except upon the supposition that they are really so. Sanctified by the truth is like it, but not sanctified by blood as in Hebrews 10. It is not the individual himself sanctified by the Holy Ghost in such cases. See in Hebrews, "hath counted the

blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing." There was positive apostasy from that kind of sanctification, and yet he there speaks to them as sanctified. The true value of the sacrifice is not only to fit them for God, but to set them apart for God. It is like the word calling: "many are called, but few are chosen."

The apostle addresses them here as the "church of God"; in Romans there is no recognised church: there was a church assembled there, but he was dealing about individual justification; he had never been at Rome so as to recognise the church. In Thessalonians it is "the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father." They had just come out of idolatry, and there was but one God, and He was God the Father. Here it is ecclesiastical rather, the church of God; he is dealing with God's assembly in the world. For the same reason he says to Timothy, "the church of the living God," and tells him how he ought to behave himself there: he adds "living," in contrast with dumb and dead idols.

We get hold of the starting-point of this epistle in seeing that God had comforted Paul by the coming of Titus, after all his troubles at Ephesus, and about Corinth too. When he reached Macedonia, "without were fightings, within were fears"; and then comes Titus, and that is where he is in this epistle. He had gone through all at Ephesus, and at the same time had the pressure of the Corinthian state on his heart, and not only their state, but sorrow that he had ever written the first epistle at all, because he was afraid he had alienated the Corinthians from him. And he was now "joyed" by the coming of Titus.

He sets out God as “the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” (Read also v. 5-7.) Then, in verse 8, he begins with the circumstances we were referring to in Asia, but says “we had the sentence of death in ourselves”; he was almost put to death, but God did not allow him to be killed, and this met a man who held himself to be dead already. The sentence of death was written on him, and he held himself dead in himself, so that his confidence was not in any life he had as a man, but it was in God who raiseth the dead. It was the carrying out of Romans 6:11: “Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin,” that was counting himself so. We have three things: God sees us as dead; ye are dead; live it. Faith says, I reckon myself dead; Paul was doing so, and is made to carry it out. In Romans he applies it to sin, but here it is to everything. His confidence is in God, and God did deliver him, and did not allow him to be killed, though he feared it. Verse 11 refers to the part all the saints had in the power of deliverance that was with him. It is a remarkable expression, “The gift bestowed upon us through the prayers of many persons.” This was at Ephesus.

The country called Asia in Scripture is proconsular Asia, the south-western corner of Asia Minor. I do not know that all Icaria was taken in. Then above that was Bithynia, and Cappadocia, and Galatia, and Armenia, and so on. I do not know that it was quite down to the sea in the south, but near the south-western corner. I would take in Lydia too. When he says, “All they that be in Asia,” that is the portion spoken of. Ephesus was a

great centre then, where was the temple of Artemis or Diana, “that all the world worshipped,” one of the seven wonders of the world.

As to the general use of the Greek word in verse 4, “encouragement “is better than “comfort”; but it is the word for “exhort, and comfort, and encourage”: it means to stir up our hearts.

“The sufferings of Christ abound in us” (v. 5) means sufferings the same in character; as in Colossians he says, “I fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ.” The Head had suffered, and Paul was suffering too for the elect’s sake, and doing so in the sphere that was given him. And you can see by their prayers they were all interested in what Paul had from God; they enjoyed it too, though the thing was bestowed upon him: just as we do now when praying for a brother in his labour. “Filling up that which is behind” signifies that there was more to be done. The Head had done His part, of course: Paul’s was not atonement. I think this was confined to the apostle Paul. Peter and the rest never suffered for the church, though they suffered for Christ’s sake, but Paul suffered from the Jews, which Peter never did. Paul was a minister of the gospel to the whole creation which is under heaven, and a minister of the church to complete the word of God; and this is not said of anybody else, it is Paul especially. I do not say that we ought not to suffer, for we ought; but a dispensation was committed to Paul, and we could not say this. We may have our share in the privilege, as some great banker takes up a large loan, and other people take up bits of it. All that take under him have their share.

The gift bestowed in verse 11 was his life spared, though I do not doubt it was all that he had as an apostle included.

Then Paul gives what I was saying about his journey round the Ægean sea. “In this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that you might have a second benefit, and to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judea,” v. 15, 16. Paul thought to have gone up the west side of the Ægean to Macedonia, and then to have come down the west side again, whereas he did not do so, but came down the east side of the Archipelago again. He says it was to spare them that he did not go to Corinth; if he had gone, it must have been “with a rod.” But when Titus came, he heard it was all right, or at least in the main. Now here we have an instance of what we see in Paul: the instant he touches a certain string, off he goes on that string. His mind was so full of Christ, that, if he touches that, he goes away into it all; it is so here. He mentions Christ, and away he is into a whole range of truth in Him. This would not, however, have been so appropriate in the first epistle. “Our word,” he says, “was not yea and nay; for the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us was not yea and nay, but yea is in him; for all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us,” v. 19, 20.

Paul says it was not lightness, nor was it uncertainty, but it was to spare them he came not as yet unto Corinth, and he wrote to them instead of going. He says, “not yea and nay,” not changing, not the lightness of a mere foolish human mind. In 1 Corinthians 16:5 he says, “I will come unto you when I shall pass through

Macedonia"; this was that they might have a second benefit; and in verse 7 he adds, "for I will not see you now by the way," only he did not tell them why just then. He had intended to go by Corinth into Macedonia, and come back again by them, but he says, I will not do that now, so he says in chapter 16. He had intended, and then did not go. And here he asks, "Did I use lightness?" No, it was another thing.

In verse 20 "the promises" are all made to Christ, and not directly to the church. There are promises by the way, such as, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"; but all the promises in chief are to Christ. There never was a promise to a man, that is, a sinner, because the first thing that was said for faith to hang upon was a judgment passed upon the serpent; but it was Christ (the Seed of the woman) who was to bruise the serpent's head. There was no promise to fallen Adam, and had he been unfallen, he would not have wanted a promise. It was a revelation of the last Adam to which his faith could cling, but it was no promise to himself. In judging the serpent God says, "Thou shalt bruise his heel" (the heel of the woman's Seed); but "the Seed of the woman shall bruise thy head." The Seed of the woman is Christ, not Adam. The promise in Christ, in Ephesians 3, is everything that God has promised, eternal life, and especially the Spirit, "that ye might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." And then everything else is thus involved in Christ. Promise is an abstract idea, which takes a form as may be needed— bruising the serpent's head; promise of eternal life given is in Christ Jesus before the world began, and so on. There is no promise to the Gentiles. There is a revelation made to the Gentiles about them, as, "Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with

his people"; or, "The promise is unto you and your children, and to them that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call": but all is in Christ. There is to the ten tribes; and many statements are made about them in the abundance of revelation. "Afar off," both in Acts and Ephesians 2, leaves it open. The apostle seizes the word "whosoever" in Acts 2, and gives it to Gentiles, or anybody else. He often takes up a word, and gives it a larger application than it had originally. The apostle does not himself apply it to the Gentiles in Acts 2, but, while it is quite true that Peter had the Jews and the ten tribes in his mind then, yet in the mind of the Spirit of God it embraces Gentiles also.

In Galatians the promises to Abraham were to Christ and to Christ only: that is the whole of the apostle's argument. There were two classes of promises and all go with Abraham. Abraham is the beginning of promise. If we go back a little, there were no dealings of God before the flood. He turned man out of the garden, if that can be called a dealing, but nothing between that and the flood. Then when God brings in the new world, in Noah He brings in government to restrain man; there is the power of the sword. After this, that it might be understood all was pure grace, God begins with promise. In the flood judgment came in; and thereupon the devil comes in and says, I govern the world, and men take up their idols. Well, God divided the world into nations and Abraham becomes the root of God's ways, and we find promises, election, and calling.

Abraham is the root of the olive tree: the promises are given to him; he is the elect and called one. And God gives the principle of all divine life, faith. Notice that, because people say, Had not God Himself settled all

these things already? I say, Yes, because when He settled them, He called me out of them, to go out by faith: “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred and from thy fathers, unto a land that I will shew thee.”—I had formed this world into nations, it has gone to idolatry and taken the devil for its god, and now you must come out and belong to Me. Well, he left his country and kindred, but not his father’s house, and therefore he did not get to Canaan then, but after his father’s death, he went to Canaan. And Abraham was the first person who was the head of a family; Adam was the head of an evil race, man. We find plenty of saints, but no heads; but Abraham was to be father of the faithful. And it is then that God calls out this distinct person to be a stranger and sojourner.

There were two classes of promises; that a great nation should spring from him and his seed, to be as the stars of heaven (that is not “thy seed,” or one). But in Genesis 12, God says, “in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed,” that is not Israel. Then we find that promise confirmed in chapter 22. It is never said, “to thee” and thy seed, “to Abraham,” but “in thee.” But when Isaac had been offered up and been received in resurrection, then he says in Galatians, “to Abraham and to his seed were the promises made.” Genesis 12 gave it to Abraham, and Genesis 22 confirmed it to the Seed. The promise is made to Abraham personally in chapter 12, and confirmed to the seed, Isaac, in chapter 22, and that is a figure in which Christ had died and risen. That was confirmed to Christ (but not in Christ), and the law which came later on could not disannul or add to it. Hence therefore you cannot bring in the law now; law cannot be tacked on to promise. Then you see there was

only one Seed, and that is Christ, and then he adds, If I am in Christ, I have the promise. That is the way he brings the Gentile in. The Jews were the natural seed, but he says, the promise of the blessing was to the one person, Christ. Very well, I am in Christ, then I have the promise; “If ye be in Christ, then are ye Abraham’s seed and heirs according to promise.”

It is not a promise to the Gentiles, but one confirmed to Christ and then to the Gentiles in Christ, through the Spirit. Genesis 15 is specific to the Jews, and in Genesis 22 is promise to the seed. The stars of heaven are the Jews only, as Moses says, “Behold ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude,” Deut. 1. It is a great thing to see what the Lord is pointing out in a passage. And He takes two illustrations of a great number—what we see in the heavens, and what lies on the sea-shore.

Some people think that the law was added to recover Israel afterwards. But this was not a thought common to Paul. What he says is, You cannot add the law. And we find another thing (which is what such would say still more); that is, they add grace to the law, and try to get out that way. This is exactly what they had at Sinai; they broke the law then and there, and God spared them by grace and put them back under law. The first time Moses went up the mount, he did not put a covering over his face, and it is then he finds the people round the calf, and that they had broken the law fundamentally before they had it, that is, before they had it in full; though they had undertaken to be obedient to the Lord, they had gone aside from Him already. Still God spares them in His government, and in answer to Moses says, “Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book”; but He brings them back under law, and it

was the ministration of death and condemnation mingled with forbearance, which is not absolute law, but law mixed with grace.

The first time the law was given on the tables of stone, it never reached them at all. Moses broke them. You could not put the law by the side of the golden calf. Moses did not know what to do with the tables. He had not asked God about it, at least I always thought so, it was his righteous indignation. “And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing, and Moses’ anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.” God could not break His law, of course, but man could not have it. They never did have pure law, therefore; but when he went up the second time, God shews Himself in His proclamation before him: “The Lord God, merciful and gracious, and long-suffering,” etc., and the people who were spared are put back under law, though grace accompanies its application to them.

Moses put the veil on whenever he came out: that was to keep the glory on. There is no veil on the glory now; the glory could not come out then, for glory with law is death and condemnation. Now, the veil is entirely off in Christ, because the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, after He has been on the cross, is the proof of salvation. And therefore now I can look at it and be changed into the same image. The veil is off the glory and on their hearts—Israel’s—and not on the glory; but when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil that is on their heart shall go also. All the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, is promised, everything about Christ that was told in the Old Testament; but there is added here

another thing, it is only through the Holy Ghost. “All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us. Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” That brings in an immense element. In Exodus 24 the covenant was sanctioned by death; if it is law, it is death and condemnation; if characterised by death, it is salvation. The blood was to confirm the covenant; but if it is a covenant of law, it confirms it to condemn me: if it is a covenant of grace it confirms it to save me.

Well, all these promises of God are yea and amen, to God’s glory; but it is “by us”; we are brought in, and then He shews how it is. “He which establisheth us with you in Christ and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” It is this security we get established in Christ by God who seals us with the Spirit. The sealing is an additional thing which is by the anointing. “Unction” is the same as “anointing”; it is exceedingly beautiful, and an additional instance of the way in which Christ has associated us with Himself. It is Christ’s own anointing is the testimony to our being baptised by the Holy Ghost: “Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost; and I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God.” The way that we get the Holy Ghost brought into us is that Christ received it. He is the Lamb of God that takes away sin; and the other element in John’s testimony to Him is, that He baptised with the Holy Ghost.

There is another thing to be remembered here: Christ received the Holy Ghost, consequent upon His work being finished. “Being by the right hand of God exalted and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now hear and see.” Christ being perfect, God puts His seal upon Him: “Jesus of Nazareth anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power.” Then comes in redemption, and consequent upon that He receives of the Father the Holy Ghost for us. This makes it a heavenly thing for us, for it unites us with Him while He is there, and that is the reason we have assurance. Christ is gone, and the question is, “Is His blood accepted?” The Jews cannot tell this till He come out; but we do not wait for that, because the Holy Ghost has come out, and having come He unites me with Christ who is there. We have a figure of it in Leviticus 9. Moses and Aaron went in, and came out and blessed the people, and so God testified His acceptance of the sacrifice. But we do not wait for that. While Christ has gone in as a heavenly Lord, the Holy Ghost has come out, Christ gone up on high receives the promise of the Father and sends Him down. God puts us into Christ, and gives the Holy Ghost, and the consciousness of being in Christ, and that is the sealing. And I have the earnest of the Spirit in my heart, which, to complete it, means that I am going to have the glory.

Baptism of the Spirit and anointing agree in substance, except that one thinks of anointing as more of active continuance. Sealing and anointing are coincident again in a sense, but that sealing is personal, and anointing has a more general bearing. When anointed I can say God has put His seal upon me for the day of redemption. And there is more; for not only does the Holy Ghost seal

me and give me tide, but He is the earnest of the inheritance too, and in me as such. Sealing is prominent among us, because we want security, and to be sure of it, and we have that by this one fact, that the Holy Ghost is given to us in this way, consequent upon Christ's sitting at the right hand of God. In the Old Testament the leper was washed with water, sprinkled with blood, and anointed with oil. In the case of the priests, the oil and the blood were mingled. It was put on the tip of the right ear, and thumb of right hand, and great toe of right foot. The blood of Christ is applied to all our thoughts, acts, and walk; and then the anointing oil follows, the Spirit to sanctify all my thoughts, acts and walk; and then beside the oil was poured on his head, the whole man as such anointed.

The sprinkling of the blood in 1 Peter i:2 is used with reference to salvation. There is never re-sprinkling of the blood. There is the sprinkling of the blood of the covenant (the covenant sealed), and the leper sprinkled, and the priest sprinkled; but there is no re-sprinkling. In Numbers 19 when a man had to be restored, the ashes were put into running water, and then he was sprinkled with it. The Spirit of God brought to remembrance what the blood had done in putting away sin long ago. For a ground of communion, the blood was always there before God, seven times sprinkled. The ashes were brought, to say, Sin was dealt with long ago: how came you to defile yourself, forgetting that you were purged? Leviticus is the book of the offerings, but we have this in Numbers as it applied to our path and journeyings.

In "sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood," we are sanctified to the obedience and blood-sprinkling of Christ; and Christ's

obedience is not what we are apt to think of as obedience, but in its nature quite different from legal obedience, because the law of God meets a will of mine and says, You must not do this or that. But Christ says, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” And in Christ’s obedience the will of the Father was His motive. Suppose my child was anxious to run out and see the judges come in, and I say, Sit down and do your lesson; and he then does so cheerfully. This is all well, but Christ never obeyed in that way. He had no will of His own to be first stopped. I have a will, and it is obedience, when it is checked, to stop. The only apparent case of anything of the kind in Christ was when wrath was coming in, and in itself He could not desire that; yet He adds, “not my will but thine be done.” In ourselves we never ought to do anything, except because it is positively God’s will. In the passage, the object is put first, and the blood sprinkling next.

“Sanctify and cleanse it,” in Ephesians 5:26, is when evil has come in, you must have it judged; you must have cleansing then. Christ was sanctified, He set Himself apart; but Adam had not thought of that in the garden. It is absolute as regards the person, and progressive as regards the state. The moment I have a new nature, I am absolutely set apart to God. In Ephesians the order of it is as if I were to say, “he cured me of that fault, having beaten me.”

“Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost” means having received it for us. Christ received the Holy Ghost a second time. It was anointing in glory. The baptism of the Holy Ghost took place at Pentecost; then in Acts 11 it is only an analogy to shew that God would have the Gentiles as well as the Jews: nor do you

get baptism spoken of there. They do not say in Acts 19, “we have not heard whether there is any Holy Ghost”: for every Jew knew that; but it is “whether the Holy Ghost yet is,” pointing to a coming of the Spirit, the time of which they were ignorant.

The Spirit Himself is the earnest, the pledge of the possession. Sealing is the act of giving the Spirit. I put a seal on a document, and that is the same idea. The anointing was putting oil on a man’s head, and it is the general fact that the oil is put there, but the sealing is the effect on the individual. If I say at a coronation, “The queen is anointed,” it is a simple fact, but that fact secures her there as queen. The anointing is a great deal more than the sealing.

John says, “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things,” and yet he is going on teaching them still. The babe in Christ, having this anointing, knows his security, but that does not hinder the apostle from teaching him all the while. The promises of God are in Christ to God’s glory, and “by us,” and the way they are by us is that God has fixed us firm in Christ, and has also given us the anointing, and has sealed us; and this same Holy Ghost, who is the seal, is the earnest of the things I am sealed for. The earnest shews the present relationship settled, and gives the enjoyment of God’s love, and I know my relationship with the Father as a child; but I have not an atom of the inheritance, only the earnest yet.

The Holy Spirit will never leave the heirs. We have a testimony that we shall not lose the Holy Spirit in Acts I where it says that through the Holy Spirit Christ gave commandments to His apostles, after His resurrection.

He had not lost the Holy Spirit as a man by rising; and that brought me to a very blessed and happy thought, because now it is something like the steam in an engine, where half the force is lost in making the engine go, but when I get to heaven there will be no such difficulty to contend with.

Chapter 2.

To return to our chapter: now Paul tells them to restore the poor man dealt with in the first episde. He says, “I determined this with myself that I would not come again to you in heaviness; for if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?” and so on. He takes the greatest pains in linking up the Corinthians with his own heart (v. 3-5). “But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part all of you, that I may not overcharge you”: because if he had said, You are all bad, this would overcharge them, for he saw that they “were grieved as well as himself. In not having dominion over their faith, he wanted them, with himself, to act in restoration; “Forgive him and comfort him, lest such an one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.”

“I wrote,” in verse 3, refers to the first epistle, and so in verse 9, I have no doubt. I do not believe much of what they say in these modern times about aorists. I think it is nonsense the way they have attempted to connect the English and Greek tenses. Verse 6 does not imply that they were not unanimous, it should read “the many.” He was afraid about some at the end of the epistle, that they had not repented properly themselves; those that did not repent he would have treated as the man himself. If all are not agreed in matters of discipline,

they must wait, not as allowing evil; but if they wait, their way will be made clear, or else there is not power enough to set things right. The effect of spiritual power is to make all those who are spiritual act together against the evil. The Greek word for many in verse 6 does not give countenance to a majority acting. The effect of the Spirit of God there is to give God's view of the case, and to put out the disobedient with those who go with the disobedience. He tells them lower down, "Ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

There is little power among us to restore, because there is want of spirituality and of that love which cares for the members of Christ. There is righteousness, and evil is not allowed. I have not observed any particular defect as to that, but I think the failure is the want of love to the members of Christ and looking after such. The effect at Corinth is given in chapter 7:11: "For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation. yea, what fear, yea what vehement desire, yea what zeal, yea what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." And when that was so, then he is anxious they should care for this man. He has been down himself, but he was a member of Christ and washed in His blood, and they are to take care of him. If the body of Christ and the love of Christ were there, the person, if a Christian, would be miserable until he were received in again.

In this case it was a man broken down with overmuch sorrow. There is no restoration properly, and they were in no state to restore until they hated themselves for their own part in all this. And it is so with us all as

principle, though we may have a clearer judgment than another as to how to act. I have no gift myself, I avow, in discipline. I see another thing, that where the general state of any gathering is weak, a person may be left out as a proof of their weakness; for if there were more spiritual power, he would be humbled and brought in. At Corinth Paul had no occasion to write this, until the man were broken down about it himself; nor is it any good to attempt to restore a man until his own soul is really restored. And as to putting out, that may be done as mere bold righteousness. This man, when Paul writes this, was grieving over his sin, and you may say restored in soul, but he was not officially restored. To know when a soul is restored requires spiritual power. Peter bows to the rebuke of the Lord, but he does not say, “I love thee more than anybody else.”

What we need to do is to take the sin of another upon ourselves (like the priest eating the sin-offering). If there were power, though we cannot always hinder sins, yet they would be checked. The Corinthians would not act as priests until Paul forced them to it. The assembly should make the sin their own before God; and that is where I have seen a real pastor: wherever there was an evil, he would lay it on himself, because he had not looked after such an one enough, or else not rightly. “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us “means that Satan was trying to make a division between the Corinthians and the apostle. Paul himself had been sorry he had written his first letter, and that though it was an inspired one; his own heart had got below its level. It is beautiful to see him urging both righteousness and grace; and in the end Satan did not get an advantage—they were of one mind in the Lord. “In the person of

Christ “means as if He were there to do it with authority. It is not limited merely to “in the sight of Christ.”

We see what exercise of heart it had been to Paul: he came to Troas, and was so full of care for them, that when he did not find Titus there from them, he could not stay, but goes on to Macedonia to meet him. And another thing, he is able to thank God for it all, “which always leadeth us about in triumph in Christ.” He might have said, “If I had had but a little more faith, I might have stayed at Troas, and preached the gospel there,” but he comforts himself that he is led about in triumph everywhere. It is the thought of captives led in a triumphal procession; He was Christ’s prisoner. He was feeling about the saints, having left Troas when an open door was there. “Well, God leads me about in triumph wherever I go.” We see a heart that has been beaten about, and it is over-full here. It is deeply instructive, and beautiful too. “A sweet-savour in them that perish” is an allusion to an old practice after victories, of burning incense to the gods, and then sometimes they killed some of the people. The gospel was a sweet savour anyway, but it was for death if it were rejected.

If a person preaches, and sees no results, it may be the Lord exercising his faith and patience, especially if he thinks he has a kind of right to convert everybody. Sometimes a person may have a gift, but he does not go to the right place— goes where the door is shut, instead of open. When the Moravians first went out to Greenland, they were there thirteen years without a soul; they were arranging to go away, but thought they would try one year more, and then, as they were reading the account of Christ’s sufferings, some one came and listened, and said, “Read those words again,” and it

resulted in his conversion, the truth burst out, and numbers were brought in. You do have to look for guidance in work; you may be forbidden to preach in Asia, and be sent to Macedonia instead, and if you follow the leading, and go to Macedonia, you will get the working of God directly. Paul says God makes manifest the savour of His knowledge by us, for we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ. He did not distinguish between saints and others, but “God led me about in triumph, because I do not know what best to do.” Of course, his was not simply evangelical work and gift, but he was an apostle and teacher. If a person is an evangelist, he will be saying, These poor souls are all perishing; he must not blame another labourer, or undertake another’s work—he will take up the work before him in love to souls. Paul had been at Troas before, going down to Ephesus. Originally he had the dream there, and was called over to Macedonia. I do not know if he preached there, but he had been there. He had stayed at Ephesus, and now he was going back.

The only way to obtain guidance in work is by living close to the Lord. We shall not have, “Separate me Barnabas and Saul” now, but the Lord will send by laying it on one’s heart to go, and then that may be by circumstances, or otherwise. I may be led to preach, and find the way opened up by a circumstance of some kind; led by an outward thing, like a horse or a mule, that has no understanding. That is what people call providences, but it is a bit or a bridle. To what degree we have the guidance definitely is another question, but there is such a thing as an entrance here, and a dream to go there; of course, there was nothing in the word of God directly telling me to come to Belfast. In the absence of

guidance, do nothing, but be a testimony where you are. “Preach the gospel to every creature” is a general truth, only we get guidance in doing it; an open door is guidance in itself, in a certain sense. If your eye is single, your whole body will be full of light; and if I do not find my whole body full of light, well, I say to myself, “Your eye is not single,” it is no use to say it is, for it is not. I may find that out as one effect of my doubt.

There may be direct guidance, I cannot call it into question: when it is given, it is not fanaticism. We get right impressions by living with Christ. John did not go and get a place near Christ in order to know His secrets; but he had a place near Christ, and then the secrets were given to him. Only you cannot go properly to Christ, as John, to ask, unless you are living near Him. Only “trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding.” You must live near the Lord, or you cannot reckon rightly on being guided. God’s mercy may come in at any time, but “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.” I should be filled with the knowledge of His will, and all spiritual understanding.

In verse 17 Paul turns back to himself: “We are not as the many which corrupt the word of God” (that is, adulterate it, or make a trade of it), it is but to suit yourself to your customers. Paul might say, “I come now from God, and I speak in God’s behalf, in the sight of God.” You cannot have a more simple statement of what carrying the word of God is. The gospel of God is the good news God has sent, but the gospel of Christ is more the subject of the good news. The gospel of the kingdom is the subject again; it is not the source of the kingdom.

To me it is a very solemn statement about the gospel here.

Chapter 3.

“Do we begin again to commend ourselves?” the apostle had just said. “We are not as many which corrupt the word of God”; but later on he ought to be commended by them. It did look very like commending himself, and yet there was no need, or ought not to be. It is all beautiful in a way, for there is a great deal of heart in it. “Ye are our epistle,” he adds. It is beautifully simple. You are my letter of recommendation. It shews how careful he was in dealing with them. It is not like the Epistle to the Thessalonians, which is the freshest of all the epistles: a very different kind of feeling runs through it.

“Written in our hearts” still brings in that he loved them. It is all as if a person said, “Who is this Paul? Where is his letter of commendation? What kind of a man is he? He did not come from Jerusalem.” Well, he says, Look at the Corinthians: that is the kind of man he is. He has been blessed to all these souls, and, more than that, they are walking well. And one of the first things he brings in is, “Ye are in our hearts,” and he gives a reason, which he could not give in the first epistle, “Ye are my epistle, because ye are Christ’s epistle”; they were a recommendation of Christ. That is, the saints are Christ’s letter of recommendation to the world— a great deal to say; and he does not say they ought to be, but that is the place you are in, to recommend Christ to the world.

It gives you a statement of what a gathering is—the epistle of Christ—though it is true of individuals. Ye are declared to be “written, not with ink, but with the Spirit

of the living God”: that is how it was. “Not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart,” Christ engraven by the Spirit of God on the people’s hearts; that is what the church is; and that, too, while they were going on so badly. He would not say, “That is the epistle of Christ,” though it was true, in a sense, but, “Ye are.”

“Not in tables of stone.” This is work written on a man’s heart within; the law was a claim on a man’s outside. It is a comparison of opposition; instead of getting claims from man in flesh outside him, it is Christ engraven, in the power of the Spirit, inside him. The law, written on stone, is death and condemnation, and Christ, engraven on the heart, is the ministration of righteousness. God used law to test flesh: “I had not known sin but by the law, for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” But to get good, God does not go outside a man to claim good from what is bad, but God brings a new nature that produces the good. Man takes up flesh, but it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. But, instead of that, God gives a new nature that delights in what is holy, and writes Christ in a man’s heart. And this is what makes them “the epistle.” We have it in another figure at the end of the chapter, “We are changed into the same image”; and in the middle of the chapter he states what does it— “the Spirit giveth life,” v. 6. Verses 7-16 are a parenthesis. “Now the Lord is that Spirit,” v. 17.

It says “letter,” instead of “law,” because it is general; if one take the letter of the gospel, it would kill people. So Scripture says, “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” And if I meet a brother in Germany or France, I always kiss him, but when I come back to England it seems so dreadfully cold; yet the spirit of that instruction is clear,

and I can act on it here as well as in France. The letter always kills. Take a particular instance: If you brought a particular lamb to the priest, which had a black spot on it, you brought a curse on yourself. I have brought a lamb without a spot, and I get a blessing. The spirit here is the mind of the Holy Spirit in the letter. If you had the letter which in the main was the letter of the law, yet the Lord is the spirit even of that, because, if it say you must have a lamb without blemish, in Him I have that. There is often a difficulty to distinguish between the spirit of a Christian and the Spirit of God, and consequently whether it should have a large or small S, because the Spirit is so connected with what is put into our hearts.

"Able ministers" (v. 6) is qualified or capable. It is one of the most absolute statements you can find. It is the activity of our minds that hinders. God uses the vessel to act on and in; and that sweeps away human understanding. It is just in the measure in which we are conscious of being mere vessels, and put confidence in nothing within us, that we are fitted to serve. God works in us to will and to do. It is not that we are mere pipes to carry something, but He acts in us and on us, and we have to take care that we give out purely what we have, taking care first, of course, what we take in. What we have to give out is really a revelation—a revelation that fits in with a certain consciousness in the human heart that there is a God, and so on; but there is a certain nature that wants God, a very important thing in its place, for there are atheists in the world. Well, the moment we see all this is revelation, it is not our thought. We never obtain anything, the moment we begin to spin thoughts out of our minds; all is spoilt then. It is the word of God we need, and this discerns

the thoughts and intents of the heart. There we have God's thoughts brought to us, just as Christ Himself was sent out from God.

There are many such scriptures as, "I hate thoughts, but thy law do I love"; "When his (that is, man's) breath goeth forth, they perish." "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man that they are vanity." In fact, men thinking are just like a spider spinning a web out of its own body, and thoughts are of no more worth. It is immensely important to be clear as to this. He adds, "What hast thou, that thou didst not receive?" This is very distinct; and again, "not to think anything as of ourselves." Of course, if God acts in my mind, I think; but then they are thoughts He has given me."

"New testament" (v. 6) is the "new covenant," which we find also in Jeremiah 31; it is new in contrast with the old. It is characterised by the forgiveness of sins, and a man no more teaching his neighbour. Then the prophet says, that they shall no more say, "Know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them." The two chief points are the knowledge of God as Jehovah, and the forgiveness of sins. God's part of that covenant has been done, and Israel would not take it up: so we now are getting the blessings of it, without its being made with us. Our Lord says at the supper, "This is the new covenant in my blood"; and here Paul calls it the same, saying he is an able minister of it. How could he minister it before it was made? The foundation has been laid, and we have the ministry of it. Christ shed His blood, and then the grace was proposed to the Jews; but they would not have it. Peter, in Acts 3, told them Christ would come back if they would have Him, but they would not. God

gives the blessings to others, and announces them by His ministers. But the covenant is not made with anybody. It cannot, in any sense, be a new covenant with us, because we have no old one. “This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel,” God says. “After those days,” it is said, He puts His law in their hearts, He forgives their sins, makes them know Himself: that is the new covenant, and a very important one too.

We are under no covenant, though we have the blessings of it (unless you take in a way the covenant confirmed to Christ). First, there was a covenant made with Israel at Sinai, on condition of obedience— “If ye obey my voice,” and they said, “Yes.” Well we know how they failed. Finally Christ dies, and in dying lays the foundation of a new covenant which was, “I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them”; and “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more,” and “They shall all know me.” Now that will be made good to them, but meanwhile we are getting the benefits, the ground of the whole having been laid in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. All the spared Jews will be righteous, but not necessarily those that are born afterwards. As for Gentiles, they never had a covenant. In Isaiah and Jeremiah “my people” is Israel, and has nothing to do with Gentiles. The “blood of the new covenant was shed for many,” which is not Israel only.

A covenant does not always suppose two parties. In Galatians it is only one. A covenant means any term on which God takes me into relation to Himself. The argument in Galatians is: a mediator is not of one; but God is one. Now the law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator, and if you have a mediator, you must

have two parties. But here you have only one. So now all depends on the sovereignty of God only, and therefore it is infallible.

Again, being all of grace, on a foundation of the counsels of God, it takes the character of an everlasting covenant; Hebrews 13. Under the old covenant God was testing man, and that word “old” signifies it was ready to vanish away; then we read of a new covenant—new, because another was before it; and it is everlasting because, without testing, it was settled in the counsels of God Himself. David says clearly enough, “Who hath made an everlasting covenant with me, ordered in all things and sure,” because it was all of grace. In Hebrews we read, “We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle.” Nazarenes had no right to come to the altar of the Jews, when the Jews had an altar; and now we have an altar whereof Jews have no right to eat. It is the simple but thorough contrast between Judaism and Christianity, the old thing and the new.

Then we have another contrast: death and condemnation characterised the law in contrast with the gospel, which is the ministration of righteousness and of the Spirit. It is the presence of the Holy Ghost, righteousness being established. The law claimed righteousness and could not get it; now, I have righteousness made out for me, and established. A righteousness being established, the Holy Ghost can come and minister righteousness. In Galatians it is characterised by the Spirit: “He that ministereth to you the Spirit,” and so on. Indeed the whole blessing now is stamped with the presence of the Holy Ghost. It is what characterises the thing—the ministration of the gospel. It is the presence of the Holy Ghost, and divine

righteousness, instead of condemnation and death. The law required righteousness and no lust. This must be death to a man; it is so in his natural condition. “When the law came, sin revived and I died.” The old covenant was confined to the law. Only the second time it was under half grace. Moses says, “Blot me out.” “No,” God says, ‘I shall not: everybody shall answer for himself.’ That is the law in principle; yet grace is introduced. God tells Moses to lead the people, but His angel shall go first. The contrast here is, if that which is done away took place in glory, much more that which remains is glorious.

Verse 13 is a very important one, because his argument runs from that to the word “veil.” It is “that the children of Israel should not look”; for “could” is not right either; it is about half-way between. The use of the Greek word differs: but here in verse 13 it is not “so that they could not,” nor “that they could not,” but “so that they should not,” as nearly as one can say it. In the words “look to the end,” the apostle took the law as so many commandments about sheep and bullocks, without ever looking beyond. Christ is really the end of it all. Moses put a veil over his face, because they could not bear to look at his face. There is no veil now; but they were afraid of the glory. The law being a ministration of death and condemnation, they could not look at that. If you connect the least glimpse of the glory of God with the law, then a man cannot look at it; just as they had before said to Moses when God spake out of the fire, “You go and speak to God for us, lest we die.” The apostle takes the law absolutely here as law—death and condemnation; but the way in which it worked in Israel then was that it hindered their looking to the end of that

which was abolished. So Moses put on the veil in order that they might not see the glory itself. That was before he went in to the Lord. The veil was not put on in order to hinder, but it was put on to the hindrance of their looking. “It came to pass when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses’ hand, when he came down from the mount that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him, and Moses talked with them. And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in Mount Sinai. And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.”

The reason they were afraid to look at Moses was because the glory was there. They could not look to the end; they did not know when they offered a sacrifice that this was typical of Christ. The “end” is clearly God’s purpose in it, and this was what they could not look to. It was a glory which came requiring righteousness, and this too they could not meet. In Christ Himself you have the explanation of all these images of the law. The veil is now done away, but it is on their (Israel’s) hearts still. When Moses was turned to the Lord, the veil was taken off, and so it shall be with their hearts when they are turned to the Lord. “It shall turn” (v. 16) refers to Israel’s heart when this is turned to the Lord. There was no glory the first time on Moses’ face because he had not been in such close intercourse with God. The whole thing is a beautiful picture of grace and law, for Moses

was under grace. God says to him, “Thou hast found grace in my sight.”

“The Lord is that [the] spirit” (v. if), means that the Lord is the spirit of the Old Testament, I believe: the Lord was the real spirit of all those ordinances. It is a beautiful expression to me of what the gospel is in contrast to law. Thus the glory itself is the proof that I am saved.

“As in a glass” (v. 18) is better left out; “we all with open face, looking on the glory of the Lord.” There is no veil now on the glory of Christ, nor is there on our hearts when we believe. There is no idea of reflection in the passage: the Greek means ‘looking into a mirror’ sometimes, but not necessarily. I do not like the idea of Christ being a reflection. People talk of our mirroring Christ from this verse: it is all absurd; how can our mirroring the Lord change us? I look with perfect liberty, for “where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty,” and I see (I do not mirror) “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” and the effect of seeing is that I am “changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” The reason is plain. If the law looks for righteousness in man, man has it not, and so is afraid of the glory; the moment there is the least glory shewn out, man shrinks from it. But now the glory of God is shewn in the face of Jesus Christ, and what is that from? It is the effect of His having glorified God, and therefore God has glorified Him, and every ray of that glory is the proof that my sins are gone. “From glory to glory” means that I make progress. “Changed” is the same word as “transformed” in the Gospels.

“Into the same image” is a strong expression. If I have a good picture of a man, I say, “It is his very image.” And

such is the intended effect of this looking at the glory. We see it in Stephen when he is stoned, as he looks up and sees the glory of God and Jesus. Christ had said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”; and the view of Jesus in the glory of God draws from Stephen the prayer, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” And again, on the cross Christ says, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit”; and Stephen says, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” He is changed into Christ’s image. He did not say, “for they know not what they do,” for this would not be true then.

Chapter 4.

Paul comes now to the ministration of it. He says “we faint not.” We are right out in the light. But then there is another thing, and that is—he explains how he gives out the word of God as purely as he took it in; he did not handle it deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commended himself “to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” The consequence is, there is no veil, and not only no veil on the face of Jesus Christ, but Paul put no veil on by want of faithfulness on his part; so that really, if any were lost, it was not through any fault of Paul’s. The veil, if any, would be one on their own hearts. “If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost in whom the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not.” “Are lost “is characteristic. It has nothing to do with time at all; it is “the ones that perish.” There is no veil on the glory, and if my gospel comes out in all its glory, the devil has put a veil on the hearts of them that believe not. This would be true now if the gospel was preached as clearly and powerfully as Paul did.

A man now, if he does not actually refuse a message, may hear it and be instructed, and come again and again. If it is actually hid to him, it is all over. I can say that of the thing I preach, but not of my own preaching. I should say just as much of what I preach that, if a soul does not believe, he will be condemned. There is a difference, of course, between coming and hearing, and positively rejecting.

“The manifestation of the truth” is here in connection with the word of God. I have no doubt Paul did it practically too. There is another thing in the preaching that makes a difference; there was then a great deal more preaching of the person of the Lord and less about being saved than there is now. I do not mean that there is anything wrong now, but there was a claim put in by God to submission by men to this Son of God; and if that claim were rejected, there was no hope for them. It was not the cry to “poor sinners” (they were that of course), but it. was “Here is Christ: now submit to Him.” And if they said, “We will not bow,” it was all over.

I think the more we get back to the old manner of preaching the better, especially as in Acts—preaching Jesus and the resurrection, though all the world now acknowledges Christ risen from the dead. I am satisfied, the more we insist on the fact, the more real power there would be to set people free. I know we are so accustomed to these things that they have lost their edge; but suppose I were to say to Jews, “There is a man in the glory of God,” they would stop their ears and stone me. Ask anyone, “Do you believe there is a man at the right hand of God, because He died for our sins?” It is the insisting on the fact that is important. Suppose you were sitting down and talking to some man, and

then found out it was the Son of God! The habit of hearing is so deadening. Yet by calling yourselves Christians you already say that you are in a world that cast out the Son of God.

Well, Paul could say, “not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully.” He faithfully declared his message and that is the first point we have. Here is the full glory without a veil; no veil on it at all so that if it were hidden to any, it would be to such as were lost, being blinded by the devil. For Paul did not preach himself, “but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” “For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts.” There we have a very important thing in the character of the gospel compared with the prophets, for even in the communication the Holy Ghost shines into Paul’s heart and gives him the sense of the value of all this for himself first, but also in such a way that he would give it out to others. He says, “when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood,” and so on. We find there a revelation of Christ to himself, and for himself, but he was also to give it out, just as here “God shined into our hearts,” not “to give” exactly, but for the shining out of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

There is more power when I say in me, than to me, and it was in him, for his own soul as well as for others. In John 7 a man comes to Christ and drinks and then “out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” The man does not thirst for rivers, but he thirsts to drink, and the

draught taken becomes rivers. “In me” in the passage from Galatians does not refer to the church, but to God’s Son. In the Acts you find Paul preached that Jesus was the Son of God, and this is what Peter never did. We meet with all sorts of notions of that kind if you look for them, such as that Paul did not know anything about the church until he was in prison at Rome. The old Latin quotation is to the point, “He reads scripture well who brings back a meaning from it instead of carrying one to it.”

We now come to the instrument; we have had already the fact of the ministry. “We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake; for God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels”; the treasure and the instrument. God caused the “light to shine out of darkness” (v. 6). God did so in Genesis 1. He who did the one, now does the other. Saul was in this darkness, and God said, as it were, “Let there be light,” and there was light. Not that in Genesis it was the beginning of light, as I believe, but still so God says to Saul’s heart. In Genesis it says “darkness was upon the face of the deep”; it does not say that darkness was everywhere. The face of the deep was without form and void, it was chaos; there it was all dark, and God said, “Let there be light, and it was light.” Scripture does not tell us when God made the light, though “all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made”; whatever it was He created it.

All geology is left in the background when you see the difference between the first and second verses of Genesis I. The first gives us, that the things that were made “were not made of things that do appear” — “in the beginning”: there it was. “And the earth was without form and void”; it was all chaos and darkness. And then He makes this earth as we have it. And, just as by His own fiat and power God made the light, so He acted in Paul’s heart. Universal creation is in verse 1. Then follows specific forming of this world which had fallen into a state of chaos—Scripture does not say how— and of darkness. In verse 3 He begins this form of earth which we have now, with fishes, animals, and so on. All that we find in the chapter is this earth as we have it now, except in verse 1 the fact of universal creation by God. Verse 3 resembles God’s dealings with a soul to bring it out of darkness as a general idea, but I could not take it in detail. It looks as if all creation were made in analogy with spiritual things; trees as kings and empires; and grass for people, and so on; but I could not take it more in detail, and it is only an image: there is no doctrine as to it.

There might have been millions and millions of years between those two verses. In Genesis 1:1, 2, I suppose geological times all came in there. Philosophers, who have examined the matter most accurately, have made twenty-six or twenty-seven catastrophes occur, and give the difference by the strata containing various shells and other fossils. But all that, if so, would come between those two verses, there is plenty of room for it all. For my part I do not believe nine-tenths of what they say about time. For instance, one of the greatest infidels in London made borings in the Nile and brought up a piece

of burnt brick, from a depth of twenty-eight feet, proving that man's hand had formed the brick, and by this he made out that so many thousands of years had elapsed since it was deposited, long before the time of Adam. But there were no burnt bricks in Egypt till the time of the Romans, and when told so of course he had not a word to say. And you constantly find such things.

"Hath shined in our hearts to shine out." The light is put in a vessel that it may shine out. Paul was in open enmity at the time, but it was the revelation of the glory of the Lord to him— "shined into our hearts." In verses 4-6 it is Christ's person that is presented, and in a certain sense that is as high as you can go. Paul's gospel here is confined to that, but I do not say that is everything, for at the end of chapter 5 we have more, "God reconciling," and so on. But here he is speaking of the glory; and redemption was not accomplished and brought down to man until Christ went into the glory. It is clear that no man can eat bread come down from heaven, unless as he eats the flesh and blood in that way: "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood ye have no life in you"; but when we know that—here "eaten"—all His life becomes the very thing that takes possession of our affections.

He was the invisible God; His coming down was the testimony of love, and there I see God in another character. It was not God sitting in righteousness and holiness, for that was law, but God come down in love. True, that was of no avail, because of man's wickedness and therefore Paul goes on "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God; for he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we

might be made the righteousness of God in him." That is, we have Him on the cross for the embassy; but when I have the embassy I say "God was in Christ reconciling"; that is the message.

In John 17 there are two glories, so to speak; the glory as God and the glory as Man, and it is the latter He gives to us. In John you will always find Christ's oneness with the Father and yet He receives everything, and so it is He says, "Glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." It is a glorious thing being God and being one with the Father; but then, all that He has as man we have. There is His unity with the Father, and we cannot have that; but as it is displayed in man, we have it all. He goes up on high info the glory He had with the Father before the world was; He will come again and we shall see Him as He is. I do not believe the world will ever see Him as He is; flesh and blood would be struck down blind if they were, as Paul was.

The treasure is the light of the knowledge of the love of God; and it is in an earthen vessel, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. He puts this amazing glory in the vessel in order that all the power may be of God. There is no fitness between the vessel and the thing that is put into it, and there you will find God and the vessel both brought in. "We are troubled on every side," that is the vessel; "yet not distressed," because God was there; "we are perplexed," see no way out; "but not in despair," for there was a way out after all, for God was there; "persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." The vessel is all broken and dealt with, but still God is there all the while. Into such an earthen vessel all this glory is put, and so in that

sense we can now rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. The vessel is made nothing of, but it is sustained by another power, which is neither the treasure nor the vessel, and so the man is dependent.

Then you come to the way the vessel is dealt with. A thing with a will is not a vessel: a person is acting for himself if he has a will; he must not think or will anything for himself, and therefore it says, “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.” That is obedience, of course. Christ was obedient unto death; that is not a man’s will, and I am always to bear about in my body His dying; that is, Christ’s dying or being put to death. There are two Greek words used in verses 10 and 11, for “dying “and “death.” The first is the fact of death, just the matter of fact, and the other is rather the moral character of it, or includes that here. The fact in Christ becomes the moral character of us. As we have it in Peter, “Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind.” Christ did actually die, and Peter had just been speaking to them not to suffer for evil doing, but, if it were God’s will, for well doing. Christ had once suffered for sins: arm yourselves, therefore, with the same mind. This would be carrying about the dying Christ had died; and this dying of Christ I apply to myself, so that the body never stirs, and the will of the body never moves.

We have, then, these two things: first, Paul, as a faithful man, never allows the vessel to have, for one instant, a will or a thought of its own. Just as much as Christ died, and completely died, so Paul was carrying this about constantly, and says, “Now you are as dead as Christ was.” And, though Paul was very faithful in that, the

Lord helped him by sending him through circumstances, so that he despaired of his life. It was not a chastening, but he was having the sentence of death written in himself. He held himself practically for a dead man, and the Lord says, “Well, now I must bring death right on to you, and so you will be a dead man.” In his case, it was making it good by the trials he went through, and with this object, that nothing but the life of Christ could come out. The Lord says, “I must make this thorough, that he may realise it fully in himself”; and then Paul sums it up by saying, “So then, death worketh in us, but life in you”; that is, Paul was so entirely a dead man, that nothing but the life of Christ wrought in him towards the Corinthians. Wonderful description! If the vessel thinks or acts, it is spoilt. There is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ to come out, and if the vessel is anything, by so much the light is hindered; but if the vessel is kept dead, nothing but the life of Christ is there to come out. It ought to have been the same in them as in himself, but it was not; of them he says, “life in you.” Death was working in him, and so nothing but Christ’s life worked out in them. Death and life are both taken morally in this verse.

Read verses 10-12. There would be no “so then,” if it had been death in the Corinthians already. There was nothing but the vessel seen. It is a wonderful thing to say for anybody, but it is said of Paul. It did work among them, but it was in them. What was it that wrought that way but the power of the life of Christ in Paul, to effect all this humiliation in them. They had all the engraving of Christ in their hearts, but it was all filled up with mud, and nobody could read it; and now the mud was all cleaned out, it could be read. The treasure was, as we

have seen, the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, It "shined" into Paul's heart. But the vessel is in danger of working, and so he applies Christ's death to the vessel, and then there is nothing but Christ's death to come out. But it was death to him as a man.

Paul may have been at work as a tentmaker at this time; he was doing so habitually there. He was very willing to receive from Philippi, but he would not receive anything from the Corinthians, because they were fond of their money. He went on working both at Ephesus and at Corinth. We know he worked, and we know he read too, for he asks for his books in the end of Timothy. Then, "we having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believe, and therefore I have spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak, knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us, also by Jesus, and shall present us with you" (v. 13, 14); that is, 'I do not mind death, I have faith in my Lord.'

The next verse in Psalm 116 is, "I was greatly afflicted; I said in my haste, All men are liars." Everybody was against him, and in the pressure of it he said, "All men are liars." It should be, "I said in my anguish or distress," in the sense of the pressure upon him; and then it may apply to the Lord; but, certainly, I should not apply it to Him if it were, "I said in my haste." In the Psalms, except in a very few, you must always first take the remnant in, but sometimes Christ will quote a passage which does not at all apply to Himself in its next clause. Thus, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit," is followed by, "Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth" (Psalm 31:5), but this would not do. It was necessary to bring Christ in if any blessing were to be given to the remnant. We find the remnant in Psalms 1

and 2 as an introduction. In Psalm 1 they come with judgment; in Psalm 2 with the King in Zion, and they are called upon to trust Him. In some of the Psalms we have direct prophecy of Christ, but in spirit He is connected with them all.

Verse 13 of our chapter, already quoted, is the great principle that, though the whole power of the pressure was upon him, even as to life, yet Paul went on preaching just the same. He tells the Thessalonians he was “bold in our God,” despite what had gone before, “to preach the gospel of God with much contention.” This is not an authority for preaching, but it is the going on in spite of the opposition of man, and it is an encouragement against the opposition of man.

This chapter is a wonderful picture, for we have the whole glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and this put into a vessel, and for all that it is such a thing, that if the vessel is not absolutely dead, it will so far be spoiled. And that is not all: there is the positive power of God beside; you must have the vessel made nothing of, so as not to spoil the treasure, and then, when you have done that, some other power must come in and act. It is a wonderful description of ministry in its sphere and operation in creatures like us; and, looking death in the face, to continue still. Verses 10, 11, have both the same end: only he puts “mortal flesh,” when he is actually delivered to death. The effect of that is, that Paul becomes a vessel of absolute life to others. All was for God’s glory, but as its object, it is for the elect’s sake, the church. “All things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God.” There we have the

truth of the church, that everything was for their sakes —all this even in Paul.

Then it had another effect. He says, “For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day.” There was a power sustaining him, and the inward man was renewed. And then he tells us the bearing of the next world upon him: “Our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Thus I am going to get all the glory, and this practically acts to perfect the man while he is not looking at the things which are seen, but at the things that are not seen. The vessel would be linked with this world, and the new man and the Spirit are linked with the other. Now he puts all the glory into the vessel, and the vessel is made nothing of—it goes through the process of annihilating, and then he finds the result. Paul’s testimony is wonderfully complete in this chapter, and its effect in us is carried out in its fullest way.

The difference between the Old Testament and the New is this: the Spirit gave them no communion and left them to “search” what He signified; but whatever He reveals to me belongs to me, and so “all things are for your sakes”; only then, Paul laid it by, as it were, and speaks of “what I have committed unto him against that day”—all his own happiness for the other world. And now he says, Work away through this world and get there. This is all applicable to the saints at large now in their measure. He himself has broken all links with the present world, and now says, “The life I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.” That is what we should seek to realise in our service; we ought to be always in immediate contact with Christ, and to bring

out nothing else but according to divine wisdom and guidance in dealing with others. And it should be recollectively so; it is not merely in the main that Christ is the object, but there is another thing, the not being distracted, and also the having our object recollectively: constantly carrying it about with you. If, for instance, I am ministering, I should be consciously ministering direct from Christ to the people. The apostle expresses it when he says, “Whether we are beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we are sober, it is for your cause”; if he was out of sobriety of thinking, it is to God; or if he was in sobriety, it was for them. It shews what a serious thing ministry is, blessed indeed, but most serious.

In Philippians, Paul said, “I am in a strait betwixt two.” To depart was far better, he says, but to stay was at least more needful for them. “Yet what I shall choose I wot not.” It is worth my while to live, because I am working for Christ; and if I go to heaven, I cannot do that. To live is Christ, and dying is gain, and he does not know which to choose; it is better for the Philippians he should stay, and so he says he shall.

Chapter 5.

We have had the subject of ministry, and the vessel for it, and he has spoken of the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and now we have the purpose of God as to the servant, the glory of God by us, and next the way that all this bears upon the responsible state; and then, lastly, we have the love of Christ constraining him. We have the whole scope of this in the new creation, just touching on Ephesian ground, and then the whole basis of it in Christ Himself. First, we have the counsels of God in bringing us to that weight of glory;

then he takes it up and contemplates it on the responsible side; and then comes the love of Christ constraining him. All link with this world is broken by the death of Christ; and at the end of chapter 5 the ground and basis of all that in the gospel of Christ's death. It is not then the gospel of the glory; incarnation and death are the two great facts.

In the opening of the chapter, he says, "we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 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," v. 1-4. He has this death, and now he says the thought of God goes beyond all that, and I have a "building of God, a house not made with hands"; but I am not tired and weary, wishing to be unclothed, and done with all the trouble; but what I am looking for is, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. That is, the power of life comes and swallows me up entirely, so that all that is mortal is lost in life.

Verse 3 is supposing that these are Christians: there is no thought about losing the reward. "Naked "is simply what Adam was before God clothed him. It is quite true that all those at the great while throne are naked of Christ, though each has got his body; this is not mortality swallowed up of life, but, on the contrary, it is going into the second death.

Verse 3 brought in the idea of death. I am groaning and burdened, but then I have seen such power in Christ, that I am not weary and seeking to get out of it all. See verses 1-5. Then from this he begins the responsible side down to the end of verse 12; verses 12, 13, are transitional: and that introduces to the new creation; but it is not now responsibility, which is Romans ground. Then we have the love of Christ constrains us, and hence the committing the ministry of reconciliation to him.

As to the difference between the gospel of the glory and the gospel of the humiliation, the latter is pure grace in God, manifested in Christ here. John's writings shew God revealing Himself in Christ to man in His life down here. What we have habitually in Paul is man manifested in righteousness before God. The gospel of humiliation is perfect grace; it is God coming down here to man where he is, visiting him in his condition as such a one on earth. The gospel of the glory takes this treasure and unfolds it. In Philippians 2 we have the whole line from the time when Christ was in the form of God till He was on the cross, when, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death. There is the manifestation of God down here among men as sinners. Well, I say, here is God come right down to me in love, and if I cannot trust anybody in the world, I must trust God now. The woman that was a sinner loved much; she did not know her sins were forgiven, nor could she have explained it theologically, but she trusted Christ, and loved much; and that is the bearing of the humiliation. But in the gospel of the glory man is looked at as the old man totally set aside, yet man is in glory in virtue of the complete work that redeems us and

justifies us, and gives us a place in the glory. The glory is the testimony to the efficacy of the work; the humiliation is the testimony to the greatness of the love. Of course it is all the same gospel.

I must have faith in Christ as a sacrifice. If I do not eat the flesh and blood, I cannot properly eat the bread come down from heaven, because I must come to God as a sinner. Death is due to the sinner; regrets will not do. We find the women weeping after Christ as He goes to the cross, but He tells them to go and weep for themselves, for judgment is coming on them. If I realise that the work of Christ for the sinner is death, then I can freely look at all the blessedness of the grace of God and enjoy it.

The gospel is both the gospel of the glory of Christ, and the gospel of the grace of God. It was grace to put the best robe on a man, and to bring him into the house. After all it is not that Christ is in glory merely, but in the riches of His grace God visits me as a sinner. If one sees a poor vile sinner, then it would be the riches of the grace that would be made conspicuous. The person of Christ comes out greatly in all that; it is not simply, Here is forgiveness for you, but “God was in Christ reconciling,” and this is His person.

Then we have another thing. After saying, not for that we would be unclothed, “but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up in life,” he says, “now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God.” God has wrought all us Christians for the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. He has not given it to us yet, but He has wrought us for it, and given us also the earnest of the Spirit. We have not it

yet; God has wrought us for it and given us the earnest. This it is that gives me confidence. He calls it “our house,” not my house. Thus I have two truths certain. I am wrought for it, and I know it now while here, for God has given me the Holy Ghost. Now, supposing death comes: well, it is “I am always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord,” though “willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord”: such is the certainty of being clothed with glory.

Then comes in the sad fact of death and judgment; but by getting Christ in the glory I have all I can possibly need to meet that— “willing rather” (“pleased rather,” is the word) “to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” I am looking for the mortal to be swallowed up of life; but if I die, I must wait a while with Christ. As to the judgment, does it take away my confidence? Not at all; it stimulates my zeal, for I have not to think about myself, but only about other people as to that. They are all dead in sins, and so he says, “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men,” for we must all be manifested at the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” The judgment takes effect upon them; yet Christians too shall “be manifested,” and I am manifested. It refers to all. We shall “receive the things done.” If Paul has built with wood, hay, and stubble, he will suffer loss; that is only an illustration. The wicked will receive the bad, and if I have gone on very poorly, I shall have the effect of that. It has all nothing to do with righteousness for me: this Christ is already. The wood, hay, and stubble are to be burned up,

though that scripture has its own special connection. So he says, “Wherefore we labour (or are zealous) that, whether present or absent, we may be acceptable to him.”

We are on the responsible side here: Paul says, “Whether I am dead or alive, we are all going to come before Christ.” First, we have the purpose, and then the responsibility, but it does not destroy Paul’s confidence—“accepted” is no question of judgment. “Therefore we labour,” is what Paul is bent upon doing. We have a complete thing—security and confidence—and we gladly labour because of it—not to get it. “The terror of the Lord” is the fact itself. He says, “we persuade men.” The thing the judgment sets Paul to do is to persuade men—other people who have reason to be afraid. The love of Christ constrained him. Paul, then, in the view of this, judged everything as a present thing, as it will be judged in the day of judgment. Paul and everybody must be judged, and that makes him persuade other people, for he himself must be manifested too. He adds, “We are made manifest unto God, and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.” It is all out before God, and I trust it is so before you. They might have charged him with being beside himself, and he says, If I am out of myself, I am with God; or if I am in myself it is for your good; that is the difference between the two states. It is wonderful how Paul did keep himself dead; and most humbling to us. Mark, it is not a question of gifts at all; but there was not one bit of flesh living: practically he was always bearing about in his body the dying of Jesus.

Now we go father than responsibility into the unconsciousness of the state that people are in, which was learnt in grace; but the effect of the fulness of grace

was to make him say that not merely the people had sinned, but also there was a day of judgment. “We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.” What is the use of his going down thus into death, if men were not all there in that horrible pit? The epistle to the Romans takes up the conduct of men, and there is Christ’s work. The Ephesians takes up the state of men, and then there is a new creation. And that is here: “Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh, yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more; therefore, if any man be in Christ, it is a new creation.” We have done with man altogether. I do not know anything on the world’s side of Christ’s grave except this, that they are all dead in sins. Christ coming down into the world was Christ’s coming to men in this life to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; but He there tested man, and the cross shews there was no ground to go upon. Now we know a dying Christ, for men would not have Him, and so everything is gone, and God does not own this world at all. That is the way Peter meets the Jews as to the very fact: God hath exalted Him whom ye by hands of lawless men have crucified and slain, and that is where you are with God.

In interpreting “If one died for all, then were all dead,” if people would get God’s mind, they would not say absurd things. As for all dying with Christ, I deny it altogether, and do not admit that we must get God’s mind through the Greek. It is a total departure from the apostle’s argument, and contradicts the next verse. The theory is that people live and die; but “they which live” are those who are not left in that state. The next sentence is demonstrative of it: “He died for all, that they which live

“; that is not all. The aorist gives the historical fact, but it does not say that the historical fact is the consequence of Christ’s having died. Why did Christ go down there? It was because they were all in the pit; and then the point is that some live (not all), and if they live, they are to live to Him that died for them and rose again. If it were translated, “then all died,” it would be historical. There is no consequence in it, and “then” is not time, but “consequently”; the Greek in this verse for then is ara, which is nowhere time. It is not consequence, though it may be a fact. The proper force of ara is illative in later Greek. (That is, it introduces an inference).

Again the whole object of the apostle too is lost by the change. Responsibility is not where I am, but what I have done. If He died, then indeed that is their state. The thing we do not find in Scripture is substitution for all. On the great day of atonement, there were two things in the sin-offering of the people—the Lord’s lot and the people’s lot. The Lord’s lot was killed, because it met the whole character of God; God was completely glorified in Christ, and the gospel goes out to the whole world. Then with the people’s lot, the sins of the people were confessed on its head; that is the scapegoat; in that I find Christ for His people, and in the other atonement, Godward. That, of course, was for those whose sins he confessed. In Romans 3 we hear of the “righteousness of God unto all, and upon them all that believe.” It goes out toward all, and is upon believers. Many a one will say that Christ bore the sins of the world; but if so, how can God ever impute them? He could not, nor does Scripture ever say so. Then the Calvinist only takes the blood upon the mercy-seat; really he denies the propitiation. We have the satisfaction to God’s glory, and then the gospel

goes out and says, “We beseech you to be reconciled to God: come in.” When they come I can say, I have something else to tell you; Christ bore all your sins, and it is impossible God can ever impute them or any one of them. An evangelist would not be right in saying, “Christ bore all your sins.” If he makes it personal, God of course knows His own elect from all eternity, but we can only know them as they are shewn out in life.

Well, Christ died, “that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again.” Death has come in, and the whole world is the wrong side of the cross now, except believers. Christ was not crucified in the world, but lifted up from the world, and this is distinctly the ground Scripture takes. As Messiah He came to the Jews; but if we find Him lifted up from the earth, the world has rejected Him, and all God’s counsels come out, and we find propitiation for the race of Adam. But the world is gone— “the world seeth me no more.” Every eye shall see Him when He comes in judgment, but as to dealing with the world as such to reconcile it, it is all over. The devil is the prince of this world, and he is judged. I grant all the privileges as a nation that the Jews had; but it is no use talking now about a poor Jew, for he has lusts in his nature, just like a Gentile, and by nature he is a child of wrath, even as others. The very thing that comes out is, I have no good in me at all. I am lost already, I have sinned, and I have sin in me. This, for faith, cuts down the state of probation altogether. A state of probation is estimated by the day of judgment, and then we could not tell till the day of judgment what the result of probation would be. The testing of man now is by the presentation of the gospel, and he sees the

condition he is in before God by the gospel. But “if any man be in Christ—a new creation.” It is one short absolute sentence. It brings in the new heavens and the new earth— everything to be made new.

If we trace the presentation of the gospel in the Acts, I do not think we find anything there strictly of the glory, though all recognise Christ in the glory. They are all to the Jews in Acts; even in chapter 13 it is so; but Paul there does not go beyond Peter. At Athens it is only his defence at Areopagus. We never find, in Peter’s preaching, even that Jesus is the Son of God: but Paul preached this as soon as he began. The burden in Acts is, that the Jews rejected Christ whom God raised up. Peter says in Acts 5:30, “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom ye slew and hanged on a tree”; but we do not find grace coming down in its completeness. The facts are there, of course, but the point is that the Jews had rejected the One whom God raised up. It is not even that He is the Son of God. When Peter says, “raised up his Son,” it is really “servant “in that passage. See Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30.

The first thing a sinner needs is, that Christ died for him; to preach Christ in the glory involves this, but where the gospel is preached, no matter how far you go, if there is a real work it attaches you to the place where the Man you preach is. Suppose John the Baptist says, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,” this goes right on to the new heavens and the new earth. All that His disciples reached is, “we have found the Messiah.” If you preach the greatest glory, you will find souls saying, in the sense of contrast, “Why, I am all in my sins,” and in that way the glory works in the place the sinner is in; it attaches itself to

the condition of the man, and then reaches his conscience; it gets hold of persons where they are. If it reaches a man, he finds out his own sinfulness, and so it touches the conscience. It is striking in Acts 10, though you get the Gentiles there, it is remission of sins that is preached for "whosoever believeth in him." Peter says, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it was he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive the remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." He testifies of Christ in full, and thereon preaches remission of sins, and then the Holy Ghost fell on those who heard. It is because there was a dealing with the Jews all through the Acts that we do not find the full and positive glory there. It is only in the last verses of the Acts that the Jews are given up. So we have no gospel of the glory actually preached, nor of the grace either in the strict sense of the term as we have been speaking of it. Even Stephen preached Jesus and the resurrection, not more.

In John 15 we have witnesses. "When the Comforter is come, whom I shall send unto you from the Father, even

the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me, and ye also shall bear witness because ye have been with me from the beginning"; and He says, "He shall receive of mine and shew it unto you." Well, the apostles had to add the exaltation of Christ, ascension too, to the repentance and remission of sins which were to be preached in His name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem; Luke 24:47. But that is the furthest we find in the Gospels and even in the history in the Acts.

It is remarkable how we think to get something all settled and complete for a long while, and then find it is only provisional; if you take it as settling things in the world, it soon proves very provisional. Until Stephen is killed we have the fact of the Jews having rejected the person whom God has exalted. Christ intercedes for the Jews on the cross and the Holy Ghost comes in with the testimony. "And now brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers," and so on. Grace begins at Jerusalem, and they are called to repentance; then in chapter 3 after the fact of the establishment of the church amongst the Jews (though it is striking how provisional it all is), and having told them too in chapter 2 that they had by wicked hands crucified and slain Jesus of Nazareth (judgment accordingly), next in chapter 3 he says, Repent and be converted, and then Christ shall come back again. In chapter 2 it is more individual testimony, and in chapter 3 it is wider in the character of testimony. In verse 26 it is not "raised up" in the sense of from the dead, His Son Jesus, but as Moses had said, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you," v. 22.

It is quite true God knew the Jews would not repent; and we have the church begun to be formed in chapter 2. Then, when Stephen is put to death, the offer to the Jews is over. Christ had interceded for them; Peter said, Repent and Christ will return. They would not, and it was all over. They had had the law, the prophets, the Messiah, and now the Holy Spirit. They had broken the first, stoned the second, killed Christ, and resisted the Holy Ghost. Stephen goes to heaven, and then there was an end to Christ's coming back for that time to the earth. God goes on with the Jews, but looked at as a people, it was over for them now, and the church goes on forming. God gathers in by the gospel message into the church "such as shall be saved," instead of gathering together the nation. It is the salvation of the soul, but it is the preserving those of Israel. They all thought that, if God did not spare a remnant, they would be as Sodom and Gomorrah, and that is what the Lord says to them. At the last, when the end comes, all Israel will be saved and all the wicked will be cut off. All the grace is displayed here, though all is provisional.

In the Acts the gospel is not developed as in the epistles, though it is the same truth so far as it goes. Death and resurrection embrace the whole thing if you regard it as to foundation. Death is the end of the old thing, and resurrection is the beginning of the new. Besides being atonement and the putting away of sins, it is the end of the world as such, and the beginning of the new creation. Satan has no more power, and neither has sin. Death is put away, so that, looked at as to the establishment of the thing, resurrection is the basis of it all. As for the church, there is much developed of blessing in various ways. When Paul states what the

gospel was which he preached, it is Christ's death and resurrection. It is evident that, when a person is raised, he is brought into a new place, and that, though all the result may not be before him yet. And again it says Paul preached Jesus and the resurrection. If I were preaching among nominal Christians, I should bring out the whole scheme of what God's intentions are.

The church is relationship to the risen Christ; 'children' means relationship to the Father. They are both immense privileges. In Ephesians 1 the mystery is not exactly introduced, but God puts us in a place and as it were says, I can tell you My mind: and that is how the church comes in. Saints were children and heirs, but differed nothing from a servant; but when the Son comes out, they get the place of children. Then, being in this blessed place, He says, "I will unfold to you all that I am going to do." We might have children without glory, but not the church without Christ in glory. The basis of all is laid in resurrection. When we see Christ's place is that of Son naturally, then He takes manhood to bring us into such a place, but there is nothing to do with the church in that; as we have in John, "My Father and your Father, my God and your God." There is not a word of the church as such. We are with Christ a glorified Man, members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, and there we have the mystery.

To look again at the gospel of the humiliation, as it is called; it gives a character which the gospel of the glory does not. The gospel of the humiliation is God in grace, whereas the gospel of the glory is man in glory—fruit of grace, of course. Romans 5 and 8 are very like to the two. In chapter 5 we have the grace of God on to our joying in God, and higher things than in chapter 8,

though we do not have the man as high. In chapter 5 it is more the revelation of what God is and of bur joy in Him. But if we take people then in chapter 8, we have them higher up in Christ. They are the two passages which give the blessings that belong to Christians. In chapter 8 we have that fact of the gospel that the man is in Christ before God, but we have a great deal more of God in the first part of chapter 5. In a certain sense it is a lower part of the work, for it is only meeting the sinner's need by Christ "delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification." "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but we glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." There I have what led him to say in our chapter (2 Cor. 5) that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them"; but in the second part of Romans 5 we have what led him to say, "for he hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." In the gospel of the humiliation we have God in Christ, and in the gospel of the glory we have man in Christ. The latter is a glorious result of the other, no doubt, but it is a different aspect of the gospel.

Notice the omission of the "you" in verse 20 of our chapter. "Did beseech by us": there is the verb only without the pronoun: he is saying how he preaches to the world, begging them to be reconciled. What he says

is, “when I preach the gospel, this is what I do”: of course it means to the world. If he is an ambassador, he is an ambassador to somebody. It would be confined to the apostles to go as absolute ambassadors. There are not now ambassadors in quite the same way, but in some degree.

Chapter 6.

“Workers together with him.” “With him” is not exactly right; the “with” is there, but not the “him.” I believe the idea is that of workers with one another; they are companions or journeymen, because they work together. “We then as co-workers beseech that ye [Corinthians] receive not the grace of God in vain.” They had all received it; but whether they had all received it in their hearts is another question. He looks at them as Christians, but he had become uneasy about them because they were going on so badly. It is no use trying to weaken these particular statements which we often find in Scripture. It is not bearing fruit merely, for if they did receive it in vain, they were not quickened at all. It is not that I have received grace to no purpose, if I am saved by it. I have received the gospel to a very great purpose if I am going to heaven. The grace of God comes to people, and then, as in Hebrews 6, they have tasted the good word of God; and in such cases as theirs it was not possible to save them after, because they had “fallen away.” In the parable of the sower, it says “received the word.” A man may receive a tract and tear it up, and throw it away; or if he reads it, he may treat the truth the same.

Isaiah 49 comes in here, because there we have their sin before Jehovah, and next against His Christ. “Listen, O

isles, unto me, “and hearken, ye people, from afar; Jehovah hath called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name, and he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me, and said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.” And then Messiah says, “I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain, yet surely my judgment is with Jehovah and my work with my God; and now, saith Jehovah that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength.” Then in verses 7 and 8 we come to the Redeemer of Israel, and God owning Messiah in resurrection glory, though Israel has rejected Him, and now is the accepted time when Christ has been heard though rejected. It is Christ who has been heard in an accepted time, and Isaiah applies it to the Jews at the end; but we come in between, and by the Holy Ghost come down we believe, though without seeing, and get heavenly things; they will believe and see and get earthly things. We have the better thing now. “I have heard thee” —Christ. Christ used the acceptable time in His ministry, though, if in Christ, we are accepted, of course.

In our chapter we must link together verses 1 and 3. Paul had the ministry of reconciliation, and he would give no offence lest it should be blamed. There were three things that came from God in Christ: God was reconciling; was not imputing trespasses; and did commit this ministry to Paul. Christ had to die first, of

course, and this rest follows; but the agents should walk so that no slur could be put upon the ministry. He is here stating what his ministry was and what he went through in it. He stood there to represent God, and had to conduct himself so that nobody should have anything to say. But he had the devil against him and all things. An ungodly walk would bring reproach against the testimony of course, but here it is of ministry he is speaking.

It is better to leave out the “yets” in verses 8-10. Some looked on him as a deceiver, and some looked on him as true; “unknown and well-known; as dying, yet behold we live”; for a kind of ‘yet’ comes in here. It is the Holy Ghost in verse 6 and the power of God in verse 7. God acts by the Holy Ghost, but the Holy Ghost was a direct manifestation of power and grace, yet He might be directing and guiding without apparent power. People have gone all wrong about the Holy Spirit; and we have not the signs now. In Galatians he appeals to all Christians, “received ye the Spirit?” etc. Instead of persons looking whether they have the Holy Ghost as they do now, he speaks to them as having the Holy Ghost; he is not speaking of tongues, but of what ought to be found now. I have no doubt Paul displayed the Holy Ghost in a way that we do not (I do not mean with signs); but we have grieved Him so that there are different degrees of the consciousness of the presence of God. For instance, in a gathering there is a solemnity at a time when not a word is uttered, and at another time they hold their tongues only because they have nothing to say. I have no doubt the presence of the Holy Ghost was much more sensible than it is now. At the present time how could you ask a number of persons, “How did

you receive the Holy Ghost?" when they do not know whether they have the Spirit or not? I can shew you books by bishops and others who say that at first the church had the Holy Ghost; but now we have not, and so we have to go to college; and all that kind of thing.

The recompense in verse 13 refers to himself. There is a great deal in that condition of the apostle, which is very instructive. He represented God as he ought to do; his vessel was all smashed—all that would be reckoned in a man— and consequently the power of God could come out in him. The vessel is all done with, and God is there. That was so in Paul, and he approved himself as given here. This has nothing to do with signs, but is what should be now. "Confirming the word with signs following" was at the first, and was all provisional. Then the church lost power, when it gave up waiting for God's Son from heaven, though that, I believe, was ordered in God's wisdom. The church was never looked at as continuing; we assume a false thing, in such a way, looking at it. Then, people say, the church was only set up for thirty years or so. Of course God knew about it, but He does not put it out as to continue, but to go and meet Christ and come back. They all slumbered and slept, but they ought not to have done thus. The fact is stated, yet it is sin. The church did go to sleep, but there is no pre-arrangement for its continuance; it is the same virgins who do go out to meet their Lord when they awake. "If that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming," shews just the same; and it is the same servant who is punished. There is no arrangement made for continuing the church.

If you say. Then are we not right to help ourselves as best we can? I reply, Very well, go and make apostles,

then. People say that the church is competent like every other society: it all sounds plausible. I know of no prohibition against carrying about the mass, and the "Corpus Christi," or whatever you call it. Some do make elders; but why do they not make apostles too? That is what I said once, and they felt the folly of it; but they could make only an imitation of elders. We have certain things which guide us as to practices; there are young widows as well as old widows; and all such directions are available for the present time. What is said about bishops would be guidance for those who have it on their hearts to exercise oversight. It was this that broke them down at Geneva. When I went there, three brethren would not speak to each other. They were called pastors, and I asked who made these three pastors. They had chosen them and would have them. "Oh," I said, "you assumed the power to make them, and now you must take the consequences." Yet we find ample provision for godly men, but appointments must fail. Suppose it said, There must be order among you here, whom are you going to put in authority? In 1 Peter 5 the elders are not ordained. It is a more general use of the term there. I see no elders among the Jews; elders might be known very well without official appointments.

They were not straitened in Paul's heart (v. 12). Paul's affections were as large, and full, and free as could be. The same thought is in what our Lord says, "how am I straitened until it be accomplished! "Then come verses 14-16, etc., giving the relative position of believers, and as the temple of the living God. Unbelievers, as amongst them, are not alluded to here, though there might have been such- The coming out is from the world. It would embrace anything where you have to act in common.

The “unclean thing” was the heathen world then, no doubt, but it is much more than that now. You could not apply this to Protestantism and Romanism; for we are perfectly warranted in treating Protestantism as the world. Popery is a different thing. In Sardis Protestants are treated as the world, for we find there, “I will come on thee as a thief,” which is what it was said He would do to the world in writing to Thessalonica; but He says He will overtake them so. They have the responsibility of Christians, and are treated as the church in responsibility, and yet they are dealt with as the world.

Verse 14. It is a new subject altogether; but if a Christian gets into the world, the heart gets narrowed, and then into deeper sin. The “world “is a great system, which the devil has built up round man, to give men their sphere of enjoyment. We have a beautiful expression at the end of the chapter: “I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” That is added here to what is quoted from Isaiah. Lord and Almighty are the two Old Testament names of God. He was “Almighty” to Abraham, and “Lord” to Israel; and now He says “Father” to you, and ye are My sons and daughters. Isaiah could say, “doubtless thou art our father,” and it may be in that general way that He will be as father to the remnant. “Belial” is a words that means wickedness. The separation applies to everything. Not to those who are married; we have instruction elsewhere about such, not to leave the one the other: “for what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?”

2 Timothy 3 would apply to Protestantism now; and to more that is not Protestantism—wherever we find the form of godliness, but the power denied, and from all such we are to turn away. It is not merely open wickedness, it is more; it is a form of godliness. I think people ought to have a great tenderness towards Protestantism; they do own the word of God. They may be the more guilty, having the more light, and not acting up to it: but they systematically, at least, own God's authority in His word, while many others put the church in its place. Romanists say positively, quoting from Augustine, they would not receive the gospel if the church had not given it to them. They say you must have the church to authenticate the words, and that is denying the direct authority of God over the conscience, unless somebody else comes in to give authority. The priest will ask you, How do you know it is the word of God? and in that way they always take infidel ground. Such is their principle. There is an utter denial both of the truth of the word and of its authority; and beside that, they have put in the Apocrypha—have corrupted the word of God. If any will not believe the word of God, unless the church says it, it is not the word they believe as such, but the church. It is under the power of Satan, I doubt not, that there is brought in not merely a denial of authority in the word, but also the setting up of the right of private judgment. Now this is meddling with God's rights. If I send a message to my servant, and you will not let him have it, you are not meddling with the servant's rights so much as with mine. And God has sent this message to those who call themselves Christians; but if you will not let them have it, that is meddling with God's rights, and not merely with man's. In a certain sense, man has no right to the word of God; he is a vile

sinner, and has not a right to anything. But if I set up and judge the word of God, this is open infidelity. I take the ground that the word of God judges us, not we it: otherwise it is clear that there is no owning the word of God as His word. The moment it is said, I must judge, I am in the place of authority, and in the place of the word. I have nothing to do with judging.

If I were asked how I know it is the word of God, I should reply as I once did to a priest: I asked him, if I took a knife, and gave him an awful gash in his arm, how would he know that this was a knife I had. He could not say the same of the Maccabees: no one dare say that. And I will tell you why: because the writer himself, at the end of the book, says, “If I have done well, and as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired; but if slovenly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto.” And again, he says something like this: It is not good to be always drinking wine, but to drink sometimes a little water.

As to teaching children the word of God, I have often said that it is like coals in a grate where there is no fire; but it is known that coals make a fire, and if a fire is wanted, the coals are not thrown out, but they lie there all ready. So with the knowledge of the word of God in people and children too, though we know very well that educational knowledge of the word is not faith. And in using the word of God, we should try to deal by it, and not reason about it. I remember once a man in a coach saying to me, “You use that book, but I do not own it.” I said, “That is all very well, my friend; but I have a well-tempered sword, and it would be no use for an opponent to say whether he owned it or not.” The point for us is not the rejecting of the word, but using it. I told him, “I

believe God loves me perfectly; but supposing there is no God at all, you have done heaps of things that your conscience condemns." He owned that, and said he was very unhappy.

Chapter 7.

In this chapter, he applies the promises to the Corinthian; themselves: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit perfecting holiness in the fear of God." First, rescue their out from the mass, and then purify them fit for God. The point here is, their being set apart to a holy God, and then in detail purify everything. We also find in Leviticus, "Be ye holy, for I am holy: sanctify yourselves, for I am Jehovah that has sanctified you: for Jehovah your God is holy," and such like words. That is, when they have been brought out of Egypt.

"To die and live with you," is not to die to sin first. Scripture never says we have to die to sin. "I die daily" is a dying in an outward sense every day. Paul's life was not worth sixpence, as men speak. Then we have a beautiful expression, "God that comforteth them that are cast down." God lets us be cast down that we may be comforted of Him. It is not a cold dead thing. People speak of the apostles as if they were like vultures soaring above the heads of others, and pouncing down when they were obliged to do it; but it is not so. "Though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent though I did repent." Paul said he "did repent," and when writing an inspired letter! The power of the Holy Ghost makes him write it, and then, when he looks at his own heart, Titus was so long coming, that he thought the

Corinthians would not have him; and that was his sorrow. Such is the human side of Paul, and is very instructive.

There is a thing that strikes me very much in Paul, that we may find at the bottom of our own hearts, too, perhaps, but there is a kind of character in it—a claim that he feels upon the affections of the people, and that of the strongest kind. “Ye have not many fathers, but in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.” There is a kind of claim of relationship, which in the state of the church we cannot have in the same kind of way now.

Sorrow led to repentance (v. 9). There is more in repentance than a certain feeling, for when the Jews asked, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Peter says, “Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” They were already pricked in their hearts. Sorrow before God led to judgment of the sin. One man had done the act, but they had all gone in heart with it; and now they sorrow, not the man only. Conversion, repentance, being born again, and faith, all go together; and yet I must believe in order to get it, and still they all go together. “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus”; to be a child you must believe. A blow and pain are identical as to time, though I must give the blow, in order to the pain. Where there is not that settled estimate of the will and mind that looks back and judges everything under grace in the power of the word, there is repentance and judgment of self all one’s life.

Verse n is the effect of their repentance (v. 10). All the outward things in which repentance shewed itself prove its reality. In verse 8, “repent” is another word in Greek meaning “regret”; so in verse io it is, “worketh repentance to salvation not to be regretted.” It is not connected with a judgment of the evil, and is sometimes used for remorse. When he says, “Repentance not to be repented of,” you get a very different idea from the expression “Repentance not to be regretted.” The gifts and calling of God are without change of mind. In the passage “It repented God that he had made man upon the earth,” it is not the change of mind in God, but when the thing changes, God does not like it; not because God changes, but because He Himself does not change. The Greek for repentance in chapter 7:9 is used for change of mind; you would not find that with Judas; it is remorse there, regret.

It is very beautiful to see the way in which Paul’s heart was in them all: even natural affection is beautiful in such a world as this; but all this work had tended to check their love towards him; they had gone to the other side, so to speak. Moses was trained in all the habits of a court, and then when he had been forty years in the desert, and God would send to the court for His people, he said, “I cannot speak” —he quite fell over on the other side; that is how we change. But Paul had written, that his care for them might appear, and he heartily rejoiced in the joy of Titus, and was glad to say he had confidence in them in all things.

Chapters 8 And 9.

We now come to what Paul is ill at ease in, and that is getting money from them. He would not take any for

himself, but he would for others. He told them about Macedonia, and takes occasion of the forwardness of others; he knows the forwardness of their mind; had boasted Achaia was ready a year ago; he goes all round about the bush with it, as it were, but thought it better to send somebody, lest his boasting should be in vain, and he be ashamed of it in the presence of the Macedonians, who were coming with him. The man Paul, as the instrument comes out in all that.

It would be very sad that there should be any poor among us, and for them not to be cared for. The laying by here was for the poor at Jerusalem, 1 Corinthians 16 did not contemplate anything but the poor. Here every man was to lay by, but “God loveth a cheerful giver”; and again, that it “might be ready as a matter of bounty and not of covetousness.” And then the administration of it abounds with many thanksgivings unto God.

We see, all through, beautiful heart exercises; and then he says all this wonderful work of grace, “the experiment of this ministration,” glorifies God, and calls out “their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you” (chap. 9:14): blessed exercises of heart on both sides, one towards the other.

They would be making “themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.” We find three things in Luke just before it. The first is the grace of God towards us, in three parables of chapter 15. In the first and second we have the absolute grace that seeks: Christ the Good Shepherd, and the Holy Ghost lighting up the light of truth. Nothing at all is done by the persons, who are the mere objects of the saving grace. The great subject is, grace is God’s joy; the shepherd is happy, the woman

is happy, and the father is happy. It is God's happiness to have souls back, and He is saying here, "I am going to save sinners, whether you Pharisees like it or not." In the third parable, we have the prodigal's reception by the father when he comes back: first, the working of sin, next the working of grace, and then the father's reception. We have the whole series of gracious dealings, till the man has on the best robe, and is at the father's table. That is, grace in chapter 15 has come, and visited man, and takes him out of Judaism and all else (for God will not have the Pharisee); and then we find that man is a steward out of place in chapter 16. In the Jews, the whole thing was tried under the best of circumstances. Man, Adam, was a steward, having the Master's goods under his hand, but he is turned off because he is unfaithful; and then comes this question: How can I—if I have these goods under my hand as steward, and am turned out of place—how can I take the mammon of unrighteousness, and use it to advantage? I do not use it for myself now, but with a view to the future. The steward might have taken the whole of the £100 to spend it, but if so, that would not do for the future, and therefore, while he can, he uses it to make friends then and there; that is the aim of it. Just while I am here, I have the mammon of unrighteousness, and, as we have it in 1 Timothy 6:17, I am not to trust in the uncertain riches, but so use them as to lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come. I turn this mammon of unrighteousness into friends, that, when it fail, I may be received into everlasting habitations. I am put out of all that man has as man,, that I may yet have it for a time; but by use of it I get reception into everlasting habitation. I use this world for the future. "They shall receive you" is a mere form for "you shall be

received." Suppose it is now a person under grace; we find him acting in grace with things here, in view of the future; it is his preference, he would rather look out for the future. "When it fail" is when all this scene is gone, and the life ends: that is, when stewardship is over.

Then, in the third case, our Lord draws the veil, and says, "Now look into the everlasting habitations." The poor man Lazarus died, and was carried by the angels into the bosom of Abraham. Here is a rich man using all for himself now, and you see the result; then do not use the world for your present enjoyment, but use it in view of another world. "Remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, but thou art tormented." If we do not use this world's things in grace, after all we cannot keep them; and therefore, He says, you have the privilege of turning them into friends available for the future. It shews how the other world belies the whole of the present. God's blessing on a Jew was marked by the possession of such things, but the Lord shews the other world to tell him how all these things are changed.

Chapter 10.

In this chapter we have the character of Paul's ministry, "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." I suppose Paul was some poor-looking man instead of being a fine commanding person— "in presence am base among you." In verse 5 I have put "reasonings" for "imaginations." The word has the force of both. In verse 6 "when your obedience is fulfilled," means he waited for them to go with him in all. There is the greatest grace in this, for he comes with authority

behind, and has what I may call a rod for them, if needed.

In chapter 10, we have a clue to all these difficulties with these false people, and also to what his thorn in the flesh was. “We will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us,” v. 13. These people had come and acted as if they were originally authorised, where God had not give them any measure. Paul had had all the difficulty, and persecution, and danger; and then it was all very comfortable for them to step in and try and spoil his work. He had not gone outside his measure. All very right in a good spirit that apostles should water what Paul planted, but that is if it is done in a right spirit. These were coming without being asked, and that to spoil the thing. Paul did not boast of things without (that is, outside) “our measure,” things of other men’s labour. “Enlarged by you” (v. 15) simply means, they were to help him to go on to other places.

It all shews how the apostles went through the same kind of difficulties that we do. Suppose we saw all the churches of the country giving up justification by faith, how we should feel it! We should think it was all no use. But God met this at Corinth, and would now. Here were people drunk at the Lord’s supper, and puffed up about wickedness, and so on. All these things were there, but power by the Spirit of God met them. Now people try to take an advantage of it in this way; they say, All these churches are just as bad as the Established Church, or anything else now. It is a great mistake, for now we find all is the world, and not the church at all. We have no church to appeal to, no grace or life to appeal to. It is not a question of more or less outward wickedness; they

are not out from the world to walk in the Spirit, so that the exercise of the power of the Spirit may come in.

Chapter 11.

“As a chaste virgin” (v. 2) is individual. It is the whole, but it must be individual. Verse 4 refers to false teachers who might preach another Jesus or another gospel, but it was not another. Here he feared they might “be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ”; in Galatians it was not so much corrupting the gospel as presenting another, which was not another, for there could not be another. Paul says, “though I be rude in speech” (v. 6), and “in speech contemptible”; he was behind no one and he pleads hard with them. Poor Paul! he had a heart in these people and could not give them up. “I did not take your money; is that the wrong I did you? I did not do any other, I am sure.”

Verse 15 is very solemn. You may even get Satan’s power at work in the form of ministers of righteousness: Satan can ape in that way. Of course, he can never be really Christ. It is not that everybody who is ignorant and preaches below the full truth is Satan’s agent, but there are those that bring in a working of Satan. It is people here; but there always will be some doctrine at the bottom of it. It appears these false teachers were pretty impudent, for he says, “If a man bring you into bondage; if a man devour you; if a man take of you; if a man exalt himself; if a man smite you on the face.” It is wonderful what people will suffer from what is false—very much more than they will endure from what is true. That which is false pleases the flesh. Take any system: it is surprising with what rapidity people learn a system.

And you will always find Satan's teaching is always learned a great deal more rapidly than God's.

It is in verse 16 he begins to talk about himself. "If they boast, I must boast too, so much so that you have made me make myself a fool about it." In the two last verses of the former chapter he was ready to glory, "but he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord, for not he that commendeth himself is approved but whom the Lord commendeth." Yet, he adds, "I must glory: you have forced me to it"; and the Lord has allowed it for our instruction. "I speak as concerning reproach," he says (for some had said "his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible") "as though we had been weak; howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, I speak foolishly, I am bold also; are they Hebrews? so am I," and so on. We have here a wonderful picture of Paul's life, telling what it really was. Paul does not boast of being a Hebrew, but no one had any advantage over him in that respect.

"The care of all the churches" (v. 28) is not the taking care of them, but care for them as now for Corinth. It is wonderful to see the power of the apostle, the way in which he could take up all the highest doctrines and yet go into detail about all these other things. We see a flexibility of power that is astonishing, a generalising power and an individualising power that he is never tired in using. In us the tendency is to get weary when we see one or two gatherings going wrong. Verse 29 is sympathy with the saints.

Paul gloried in what he had gone through, he required power to go through all these things; it was not in his own power he went, and the sustaining is wonderful. Suppose a man preaching in this town was flogged for it,

and he goes and preaches all the same at a neighbouring one! So he says, “But even after that we had suffered before and were shamefully entreated, as ye know at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.” Nothing broke him down: he was not cowed a bit after having his feet in the stocks. How naturally the apostle writes! After a kind of conversation in verse 31, he comes out with something he had quite forgotten, but that now occurred to him. It made little of himself to have escaped in such a way, but he did not mind that; it was what he was glorying in.

Chapter 12.

Here Paul says, “I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord”; and then we come to infirmities and persecutions, a kind of honour on one side; but the Lord is able to unite what is in one sense honourable with discipline in the flesh on the other side. It was Paul’s honour in that he was suffering for Christ, but along with that it was discipline to the flesh. We have another aspect here to these infirmities, for they are the same though looked at in a different way.

Verse 2 should read, “I know a man,” not “I knew”; he knew him while he wrote. The fourteen years ago is when it happened. “I know a man in Christ fourteen years ago caught up.” The term “in Christ” is important, because that takes him out of himself; for he says, in himself he will not glory, but of such a one he will glory. The sense is, a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up. For it really was Paul; but he will not allow it was himself, because whether in the body or out of the body he cannot tell. He had not a consciousness of

human perceptions; he perceived these things now, but then he did not know how he knew or saw it all. There is consciousness of the body and so he could not say whether in or out. His perceptions were gone from him; and when he got back, he could not tell about them; he did not receive them humanly, neither could he communicate them humanly. The church he had by revelation as he says. We have it as a thing we are accustomed to, but to have had it all come in fresh—a revelation—a thing we have never known nor heard of before, is an amazing thing: and especially so to him, a strong Jew.

The third heaven here is in a different character from paradise. The third heaven is going on high—a degree of exaltation; paradise is rather the character of the thing. Our Lord went to paradise, but paradise is the character. The word “paradise “means nothing but a Persian garden; there they had beautiful gardens. The third heaven is hardly the heaven of heavens. There are the sky, the created heavens, the starry heavens, and then the heaven where the throne of God is placed, though this again is a figure no doubt. “Heaven itself” in Hebrews 9 means the reality, and not the figure. We see the same thing in Ezekiel, where he saw the covering of the cherubim and above that the throne of God or the figure of it. These have not exactly to be atoned for; but wherever any creature has been, it has to be cleansed.

We have also the tabernacle for a type. The camp is the world; the court gives the first heavens; the holy place the second; and the most holy, where the ark was, the third, with the throne of God. The brazen altar was not in the world, because Christ was lifted up out of the world. Then the holy, and the most holy; the expression

“heaven of heavens “is used, I take it in rather a general way. “Rejoice, ye heavens,” is in contrast with earth and that you find constantly; only we have in the tabernacle something more specific, and the Jews constantly used it so, and spoke of three heavens. It was very natural, if God had said Moses was to make all these things after the pattern of things in the heavens, that they should call them so, the three heavens, because there were the three places. The tabernacle represents three things: Christ Himself; the church because God dwells in it; and the creation or created heavens. Christ Himself, for the veil is his flesh—through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; next, as we have seen, we get, as shewn in creation, the three heavens; and then we have “but Christ as Son over his own house, whose house are we.” It is not His body there, because we have it as the dwelling-place of God. We never find the temple in Hebrews, because the temple is the permanent thing, the millennium, while in Hebrews the saints are looked at as strangers and pilgrims in the wilderness.

The thief was not in the “body.” The very thing the Lord taught the thief was that he was to be in paradise before the “body “was formed. It is not into His kingdom, but “Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom.” He had learned as a Jew that a Christ should come, and there Christ hung upon the cross. He owns Him there as Lord, and the Lord says, ‘I cannot wait for that kingdom, but you shall be in paradise to-day.’ That is, it is the happiness of soul meanwhile. That is the character of Luke all through in grace. We have no “abomination of desolation” in Luke 21, but we have Titus’s army, and Jerusalem trodden down of the Gentiles till the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled. All is referred on to the

kingdom. Our Lord said at the passover, “I will not any more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” He looks at the present things: they are always brought in, though they are carried on. In these things Paul’s ministry and Luke run together a good deal.

It is when Paul speaks of paradise that he speaks of hearing things he could not utter: that is where blessedness is. The paradise of God, and my Father’s house are very different ideas. We have not the Father in Revelation except “having his Father’s name written in their foreheads” (chap. 14), after the opening chapters. There is brightness and blessedness there, but not fellowship with the Father exactly: we have not that in the Revelation. We have all that is descriptive of glory and blessedness, and beauty, and so on—golden street and glass, and all the pictures of things, which, if we compare scripture with scripture, we get to understand. We have the capital of God’s dominion where He has the garden of His delights; but this is a different idea from the relationship of the Son with the Father; and we are going into all that. One is secured delight with God and the other is with my Father; and this is the highest way of blessing.

The “place” John speaks of in chapter 14 is a place in these mansions; as if He said, ‘Do not you fancy I am going off to leave you in the lurch,’ as men speak. “I am going to prepare a place for you. It is not only a place for the high priest, but for the priests, for all of you, and I am going to get it ready for you.” As regards locality, this is not brought into question, but it is the Father’s house; and the place of it we really know nothing about. We say going up to heaven, but then that to Australia would be going dozen, and yet it is all quite right; it is

only language adapted to our thoughts and feelings as men. There is no place with God in a sense, and no time either, but we speak as men. God is “I am,” the self-existing One. Yet all these things are real, when you come to the moral relationship—very real indeed.

The “not lawful “in verse 4, means not morally possible. It is not that the things were not capable of being uttered, but that they were unutterable in their character. It is not like “cannot be uttered,” but a thing that morally cannot be done. I say, such a thing cannot be, without meaning to say that the thing is not physically possible, but that it is a thing not to be done or thought of. I do not know any one word good for it. In Romans it is the denial of the utterableness of the groans. Then we have the glories of the man in Christ in the third heavens. We are not to be taken up there for unutterable revelations, but for unutterable glory we shall be. We are sitting in heavenly places in Christ; the man in Christ, is in Christ where He is.

Satan accuses the brethren before the throne. We have Satan in the opening of Job coming among the sons of God, where the government of God is carried on. “Spiritual wickedness in heavenly places “is in contrast with earthly things. Joshua wrestled with flesh and blood, we do not; but it is where our blessings are, and this does not say anything, except that they are not on earth. We shall rise into the air, and meet the Lord there first; we shall be in the Father’s house, and we shall be free of all the heavens then; the Father’s house is the highest thought we can have.

The government of Israel was carried on at the altar of incense, and that rather belonged to the most holy,

though it stood outside, and the effect of the sin of the priesthood was that, after the death of Nadab and Abihu, they could not go inside, had it not been that the priest would have gone in and out continually as in the millennium. The incense belonged to the inner place. God spoke to Moses from the cherubim, but Moses was distinct from all the rest, for he found grace in God's sight.

There was nothing in the government of God in Israel that corresponded to the church of God. God governs us now according to the relationship in which we are placed; Israel was governed according to what a man ought to be, for although God was in heaven, in a certain sense, He governed on earth. Although what they had were shadows of things in the heavens, yet it was real government by them by earthly means. God gave distinct law, which goes to the extent of what a man ought to be and no farther: but we are brought into the light to God, as His own children, with fitness for the heavenly places. There may be something of likeness in the individuals because saints in Israel had to go and suffer like us; but this was exceptional, while with us it is the reality. Israel's calling was a very different thing from the exercises of individual faith. But God had to deal with the individuals on what was really higher ground than that of the calling within which they were. Individually Abraham must go higher up to get with God, even as a figure he is not in the plain but on the mountain.

Discipline is government. We ought to walk in the light as God is in the light. We have two things, the veil rent, and our calling into God's presence without a veil; and also we have a Father who is holy: "Holy Father, keep

them in thine own name." And then we have a third thing, and that is "the Lord" in the general administration of things—the general idea of the Lord's disciplining. The whole place of the Christian is a different thing from Israel's. God may shew His government as He did in bringing in the flood, and if He need He will. Righteousness does exalt a nation, though the direct government of God is over. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him, but direct government with laws leading to certain results is over, though what a man sows he reaps. God does not let the reins out of His hand. He takes His people of old and deals with them as a nation, but now His children have the fullest revelation of His dealings with them, and that as children, and He does not even say "not a sparrow falls to the ground without (God, but) your Father"; as one who has to you the place and tenderness of a Father, and not a thing can happen to you without His care.

Well, we are in Christ; we have not these visions and revelations of course (they were special to Paul), but we have this association above, and the place of a Christian in which we can glory. All that was revealed to Paul belongs to us. We are not made the vessel of its revelation as he was, but all things are ours, just as much as they were Paul's, and it is "a man in Christ," and of such an one will I glory. If I look at myself "in Christ," I can glory, not talking of revelation now, but if I say "myself," I cannot glory except in my infirmities; "for though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool, for I will say the truth; but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me" —revelations, of course, were neither seen nor heard— "and lest I should be exalted above

measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." Now we have the vessel again—we have had it before—we have the immense revelations that he had, so that he could not tell them, and then the vessel in which the revelations were, and which had to be put down.

And another thing we have in passing; we see here a proof that no extent of divine communication ever corrects the flesh, even where it is real; but the flesh is a judged thing, and a hopelessly bad thing. If we take the flesh by itself, it is lawless, so that God has to bring in the flood upon it. If you take it under law, then it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Then if we take flesh in the presence of Christ (that is, God come in grace), it crucified Christ; or, if we bring in the Holy Ghost, men resist Him; and then, if we put flesh in the third heaven, he will be puffed up; and if there were a fourth heaven, and he be put there, he would be more puffed up still. Such is its character; all the effect of the abounding of grace and glory is only to shew its character out. Here the Lord had to put Paul in danger, and gave him a remedy; the flesh is not exactly corrected here. Morally all the Lord could do was to keep the flesh down for him. Paul was a man, and he must be dealt with as a man in his responsibility. The time was not come to give him glory instead of flesh, and so he is dealt with as he is.

It is a great point—man's real condition. All would own that flesh is bad in a general sense, but because they think so, men would correct and improve it. We are bound to do good to every man, whoever it is, even as

man; but the pretension of men is, that at bottom there is something good in a man, and so ultimately you may make anything out of him. And so they are working education for one great thing. Of course, everybody has to learn something, but the common idea of education now is an infidel idea. They give everybody votes, and then it follows that they must be educated in order to know how to use their vote. The whole thing is nonsense—a mere question of the passions of the flesh. In some states they compel education. God has committed children to parents, and the parent is bound to care for his child. No state can come in between God and the parent. If the state come in, you will have to leave the state. It is from no resistance of the power that I say so, for that would be wrong directly; but it is the word of God that gives the state its authority, and therefore I submit or go. If you were compelled to be a soldier, if it is against your conscience, you must be shot, or something else: that is all.

But we have not got quite to the end of the thorn in the flesh. It is called the "messenger of Satan," because it was an instrument of Satan; just as in Job's case, when Satan brought sickness and disease on Job, the Lord let Satan loose at him; so it was Satan's messenger here to buffet Paul. It is an additional proof, that no grace ever mends the flesh. Put the flesh down; everything is useful for that. It was putting down the flesh, making Paul contemptible; it was a sort of counterpoise to the abundance of revelation. He besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from him; but the flesh must be put down. "You must trust My grace, and the character of My grace is that My strength is made perfect in weakness. If it is My strength, it is not in man's power

that it is made good." Of course it was all through death: Christ was crucified through weakness, and that He might destroy him that had the power of death; and the character of Christ's strength working in us is the putting down of all our strength, and then His power can work— "Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." We have the man in Christ first, then we have from the "in Christ" abundance of revelation, which might puff up the flesh, and then flesh is made totally nothing of, a hindrance put upon it, and Christ's power brought out. Only in the case of Paul, all this was for Christ's sake, though it was a thorn in the flesh, so that it was his glory in the other aspect of it, and he was suffering for Christ. All this is very instructive as to any ministry, because the power of ministry is in putting the man down that Christ's power may be there. God's power is a very different thing from man's. Man may take a vessel and do what he likes, but he cannot fit the vessel with any conscious power in itself. God cannot use the vessel until its qualities be mere qualities, and this connection with man's will and energy be broken.

Men are found constantly trusting in means. Now I quite admit certain things, and all things are lawful to me, and I am thankful for any facility in my way, but trusting in such things will not do. The Holy Ghost is acting, and when He works, all else must fall into low place. The apostles went on foot, and we go by rail; but ten thousand times more was done then, because the Holy Ghost was carrying on things everywhere. "Your faith to Godward is spread abroad." That is better than any railroad; the power of the Spirit of Christ was what he reckoned on and trusted to, and that really did the work.

We go looking at what are facilities for the body, human things, and things which we are thankful for; and they get trusted, instead of the power of God. In Paul's day these things were not known, and yet immensely more was done, because the Holy Ghost wrought. We see it clearly enough. Instead of three thousand souls converted by one sermon, it takes more like three thousand sermons for the conversion of one soul. Yet God is working now remarkably through mercy; He comes in and acts sovereignly. Take printing again, it is all very well; God can use such things as well as anything else. All things are lawful, but it is the trusting to these immense facilities that is our error. Here was a little handful of Thessalonians converted, and all the world is really preaching the gospel by telling what had happened there: "from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad, so that we need not to speak anything." All the world was talking about it. "Why, there is such a people started at Thessalonica, they have given up all their idols, and they are waiting for God's Son from heaven." The world itself spread it—there was such a power in the testimony.

Some use placards. I leave every conscience free to judge for itself, but I should not use them. I doubt very much that more work is really done by it, but I leave every conscience free. I would trust God for it all, and meet people as God brings them. I would not announce even a gospel meeting, except among the saints, and I should be glad of their fellowship in it. I was in Edinburgh once, and there was a certain person who asked me to go on with his meetings. I did not, but I got to know some of the people with him, and talked to them

about the Lord's coming. They considered it quite a wild thing, but yet thought I ought to lecture about it, but I would not have any bills. They wanted them to be put in the shop windows, but I would not have any. Well, we had the meetings on the Lord's coming—a set of lectures —and this man who had been very violent came. We had twenty people from different congregations—just the people I wanted—and it set the Lord's coming as a thing on its legs again; and then some of them set up a kind of society for having lectures every year. I find these things going, and it is a very serious question. I see a great deal of work doing, and work that I delight in abstractedly, missionary work, tracts distributed, and so on; but I see, too, that the world and the church are mixed up together, and the manner of doing these things is of the first importance in doing them. Am I to do good, or seem to destroy my good by mixing with the world? There was a dear old man—an Independent secretary for the Irish schools—and he asked me if I would be on his committee. I said, 'I cannot go with an accredited religion through the world.' 'Oh,' said he, 'we must be accredited with the world.' 'But I will not be so,' said I; 'and look! here come all these people with their guineas. Why, even Peter himself could not be a member of your society, for he says, Silver and gold have I none.' It is very often the question whether the way of doing a particular thing is right. By the manner you may do a great good, or a great deal of evil. Am I to accept the evil in order to do good, or am I to trust the Lord? What God is now doing is separating the precious from the vile; and this is not a matter about which I have no feeling. It is often pressed upon my spirit, Am I to put water in the wine that people may drink it? At first, I did not care where I went— into a church or elsewhere—to

preach the gospel, or into a Methodist chapel, and so on. I have no principle that directly hinders me, but one day, at Plymouth, they brought me short up, for I had in the vestry to write down who ordained me, and this brought me to a point. There was the question straight out: Am I to accept that, in order to get an opportunity to preach to five thousand people? Spiritual means, of course, can be used, such as saints going round to houses in the way of positive love to make the preaching known. The means are all in our power.

It was that verse in Jeremiah 15:19, 20, that laid hold on me, “If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me; and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth; let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall; and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee? for I am with thee to save thee, and to deliver thee, saith Jehovah. And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.” Jeremiah is in exactly that position. Jerusalem is looked at as a blessed thing and as a wicked thing, and so is the church now in a sense. And after speaking of all that conflict in Jeremiah’s spirit, the Lord says to him, “If thou separate the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth.” At the first beginning that sentence laid hold of me. An infidel might say of the church, ‘Down with it! Down with it! ‘and I could not say, “The temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah are ye.” So, then, what am I to do? Separate the precious from the vile. And then comes the question, What means am I to use for doing that which I desired to do? and can I associate myself with worldly means for a divine thing?

I know that preachers come by rail, preach, and are away again; but I doubt that more work is done. I doubt that this great employment of means to carry things through has any real power in it. Some ask how would I compel them to come in; but this is compelling them to come in to heaven, not to come in to the preaching. The question is, are the means I am employing, such that I am not mixed up with the spirit of the world and the mere world's instrumentality? Though I quite believe God is using means, many means that I could not use, it does not move me. Take the handbills; it does not follow that these people would not have been converted if there had been no handbills. Yet I have not the most distant idea of even convincing other people about it, or of binding their consciences. We have to go on with the Lord. I see God working in all kinds of ways. One gave it me as a reason for staying in the Establishment, that he was useful there, and that he had such numbers of people to hear him there, that he would never get elsewhere. And that might be quite true as to fact. I am delighted when good is done; but what I see, even as a fact, is that where there is earnestness and faith, God blesses the earnestness and faith. But there is a quantity where there is a flood; and if the earnestness is great, it is like a river swollen, that carries down a quantity of mud with it, and there is a bar made outside. After a revivalist sermon, for instance, you find the greatest difficulty in the world to get the people to go on without excitement. Still I rejoice that many are converted. God may use all sorts of means that I could not use; but He can do what He pleases—I must do what is right. If I cannot do what others do, I should be very wrong in condemning them for using such and such means. It is not merely placards that I speak of; but it is a large

question that one has to be exercised in—what means can I use? I can suppose one who has not had his conscience awakened, going on with this and that—take a clergyman saying that children are converted in baptism; or any one kept excusing plenty of inconsistencies, and worse, where numbers are converted by the preaching; but that justifies nothing. Take women again, who are going about preaching, but I do not believe it is right, however many conversions there may be.

Chapter 13.

If we take chapter 12 as a whole, we have the third heavens at the beginning, and the grossest, vilest sins a Christian can fall into at the end; but between those two, we have where the real power is to avoid the sins, and that is to have the flesh put down, and the power of Christ resting on him. Then Paul refers to the persons who had sinned—" I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that if I come again I will not spare." He was afraid, lest there were debates, envyings, and strifes, and so on among them, and he would not spare them.

Then follow some verses in chapter 13. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves." Most are familiar with what the real truth of it is; that the beginning of verse 3 is connected with verse 4: "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, examine yourselves," and so on. The last part of verse 3 with verse 4 is a parenthesis. The apostle had already shewn that these false teachers had been calling him in question; he had been giving the proofs of his ministry, and at last he says if you are looking for proof of Christ

speaking in me, examine yourselves, as much as to say, “You foolish people, you are calling me in question; look then at yourselves.” He adds, “Except ye be reprobates.” A reprobate is one cast out as good for nothing; a figure from reprobate silver. He means, “If you are Christians, Christ has spoken by me, and it is by my means you are Christians.”

“We shall live with him by the power of God toward you” (v. 4) is, I take it, like saying life works in you, the power of God manifested towards them; but Paul was dead as a man; yet, by the power of God that wrought in him, he lived with Christ. That helps to introduce “examine yourselves,” because he did not doubt they were living. He says in one place, “I protest by your rejoicing I die daily.” But if dead here, he had life in Christ which is much more solid, I am sure. This examination could not be to pacify themselves. It is not my examination of my spiritual state which gives me peace, but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I ought not to get peace in looking at myself, though I trust there are signs of grace there; but really, unless a man has the Spirit of Christ, he is not competent to examine himself; and if he has the Spirit of Christ, there is no sense in doing it. One was insisting on this examination, and I asked, Are you competent to judge without the Spirit? It is a blessed thing when souls are brought to find out that there is no good in themselves, that is, in their flesh; and then they do not look for any; they find that Christ appears in the presence of God for them, and then all is settled. Nobody ever gets clear about it until he knows there is no good in him, and then he looks at Christ.

“Though we be as reprobates” (v. 7), is as though he said, “you may consider me good for nothing, but I hope you will be all right.” It is a kind of taunting speech, not bitter, but yet taunting in a way— “what are you all about?” “Wish your perfection” (v. 9) is, he wishes everything complete in them; not so much looking at them as full-grown men, but with everything complete.

In the benediction “Lord Jesus” is title; Jesus is a name. We are accustomed to take Jesus Christ as a name, which it is not. The communion of the Holy Ghost is the power of the Holy Ghost in us.

Meditations On The Acts Of The Apostles

Introduction.

The Acts of the Apostles are a continuation of the Gospel of Luke, and are written by the same Evangelist. The discourses, whether of Peter or of Paul, have their source in the heavenly commission which is found at the end of that Gospel. It is not necessary, I hope, to say that the whole is given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, because each of the evangelists has been employed by God to present us with a different aspect of the history of the Lord; and each has accomplished, with the help of the Spirit, the work assigned to him by God. For example, in Matthew we find much more the dispensations of God, and the Lord as Emmanuel in the midst of Israel on the earth. In Luke, after the first two chapters, we have the Son of man, and the ways of God in grace and the blessings of the present time. Then again, in Matthew, the ascension of the Lord is not recounted, and the commission given to the apostles comes from a risen Jesus, and is addressed to the Gentiles as though the residue of the Jews were already received in grace. The Lord, in Luke, is about to ascend into heaven, and goes there while speaking to them, blessing them with a heavenly blessing; and the commission is addressed-to all—first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles. The disciples were to begin in Jerusalem; and this work—the accomplishment of their mission—is what is found recounted in Acts.

Let us follow the course of this story, which is essentially the history of the activity of the apostles Peter and Paul: the first among the Jews, and in the foundation of the church at Jerusalem; and the other among the Gentiles, although he always addressed himself first to the Jews. The first was one of His eleven disciples who had followed the Lord on the earth, till the cloud received Him and took Him from their sight. The last, Paul, an open enemy to the name of Christ, and converted in sovereign grace while he was occupied in the destruction, if possible, of that name, only saw Him in the glory, and went out to call the Gentiles to the faith: marvellous witness of the sovereign grace of God, and of a glory which renders a magnificent testimony to the perfect and accepted work of Christ, to which believers are led by faith in Him and in His work. Both these two great apostles laid the same foundation of the salvation preached, that there is but one Saviour and one work by which we may be saved.

Now the grand and important fact, on which all the history depends, is the descent of the Holy Spirit. Doubtless, in all Biblical history, the responsibility of man is found, as well as the ways of God, through the deeds and weakness of man; but nevertheless the presence of the Holy Spirit on the earth, sent by the Father and by the Son of man, and dwelling in the faithful and in the house of God, is of immense importance. It is only when God has accomplished redemption that He comes to dwell in the midst of men. He did not dwell with Adam in his innocence, nor with Abraham, nor with any, till He had brought Israel out of Egypt, and had rescued them from the hands of the king of Egypt, in whose hands they were prisoners; then He

came to dwell in their midst in the cloud, and the tabernacle was filled with His glory.

Thus, as soon as the Son of man is gone into heaven to sit down at the right hand of God, having accomplished the work of redemption, the Holy Spirit descends according to His promise of the Comforter, and the baptism of the Spirit is realised. Sent from the Father, He cries, “Abba, Father,” in the hearts of those who have received Him. Sent by the Son from the Father, He reveals the glory of Him, the man in heaven; and, more than that, forms the body of Christ joining the members to the head, so that he “that is joined to the Lord is one spirit,” dwelling in the believer, and also in the universal congregation of believers, so that they are together the habitation of God. It is evident that this truth is of immense importance; the spiritual liberty given to the child of God, the unity of the assembly of God, and the union of the children of God, all depend on the presence of the Spirit, as all are founded on the work of the Saviour on the cross. Then this truth reveals the state of the external church where He dwells, because she has grieved the Spirit, and has been— and has acted—in a manner altogether contrary to what He would have her be and do, so much so that the judgment of God is ready to fall upon her.

Since I have spoken of the descent of the Holy Spirit, it must be understood that the “new birth” is not the point here (though that may be accomplished by the same Spirit), but rather the personal coming of the Spirit, when the Son of man ascended into heaven. The Holy Spirit has worked divinely since the foundation of the world. He it was who moved upon the face of the waters, who inspired the prophets, who has been the immediate

instrument of all that God has done on the earth and in the heavens. But He only came here below when the Son of man went to sit down at the right hand of God (John 7:37-39), and is only received when we believe (Eph. 1:13; Gal. 4:6). This is seen also clearly elsewhere: we are sealed when we have believed, and especially when we have believed in the value of the blood of Christ. Washed in this precious blood, we are fit to be the habitation of the Spirit of God. “Know ye not,” says the apostle Paul, “that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit which ye have from God?” As when the leper was cleansed and purified under the law, he was first washed with water, then sprinkled with blood, then anointed with oil (Lev. 14:8, 9, and 14-18)—clear figure of our purification by means of the word of God when we are converted and born again, then of the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, and finally of the anointing of the Holy Spirit by which we are sealed for the day of final redemption.

Also all gifts, the exercise of which is found in the church, are the manifestation of the Holy Spirit who works there. But here, in the Acts, the exposition of the operations of the Spirit is not found, but the fact itself of His coming in order to work.

Chapter 1.

Let us now come to the examination of the narrative itself. This begins with the great truth of which we have already spoken. The disciples were to wait at Jerusalem for the baptism of the Holy Ghost. We shall find again the proof of another precious truth. The Lord, after His resurrection, gave commissions to His disciples by the Holy Ghost. We shall not lose the Holy Ghost when we

are raised again: truth perhaps simple, but which makes us feel how great will be our capacity for happiness in that state. Now a great portion of our spiritual strength is employed to enable us to walk in integrity, in spite of the flesh and the temptations of the enemy; but then neither the one nor the other will exist. All the power of the Spirit in us will be employed in rendering us fit for the infinite felicity we shall find there. We shall enjoy it according to the strength of the Spirit, as Christ gave gifts by the Spirit to His disciples after His resurrection.

Remark now the intimacy of the Lord with His disciples. He spoke of the things belonging to the kingdom of God. Christ is now glorified, but» His heart, full of divine love, is not removed, is not any the farther away from His own. When He appeared to Saul, He said, “I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest.” He speaks to Ananias with authority it is true, but as with a friend, opening His heart respecting Saul, and sending Ananias to speak to him.

He was not ashamed to call His disciples friends on the earth; He is not ashamed to treat them as friends now. Immense blessing! To feel that the Lord of glory is near to us, that He holds us as friends and loved ones, and that He can feel compassion also for our infirmities.

The disciples expected still the visible kingdom of the Lord in Israel; their hearts were still Jewish. They quite believed that He had risen again, but expected that their hopes of the restoration of Israel as a nation would be realised by the Lord, now that He had come out of the sepulchre. The Lord did not tell them that the kingdom would not be restored to Israel; but that it did not concern them to know the times and seasons which the

Father had put in His own power. The kingdom shall be restored to Israel—when is not revealed. The Son of man will come in an hour when He is not expected. He sits at the right hand of God the Father till His enemies shall be made His footstool. In the meantime He gathers His co-heirs, those who are content to suffer with Him; and caught up into glory we shall reign with Him. It is not revealed then, it was not revealed to the disciples—the hour of the Saviour's return; but they should receive, said the Lord, not many days hence, the power of the Holy Ghost, which should come on them, and they should be witnesses to Him in Jerusalem, in Judaea, in Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. And, having said these things, He was taken up, while they beheld, and a cloud received Him and took Him away out of their sight. They were to be eyewitnesses as far as this point of His heavenly glory. The Holy Ghost was sent after Him (see John 15:26, 27). We shall find later that Saul saw Him in His heavenly glory for the first time, of which thing he was to be the special witness. How the Holy Ghost has rendered clear testimony to this glory, we shall see in the discourses in the Acts; and again it may be seen in the epistles of Peter and elsewhere.

But here is found, before the coming of the Holy Ghost, a very remarkable testimony rendered by means of angels. The disciples had their eyes fixed on the heavens while Jesus was going there. This was very natural. The beloved Saviour, given back to them from the grave, was, apparently at least, abandoning them again—for heaven, it is true, which ought to have strengthened their faith. He had left a promise of the power of the Spirit, which, however, had not yet come; and therefore the consciousness and direction of this power, which

was to reveal all the truth, was wanting to them. He had gone away, and what should they do? They must wait.

And as their eyes were then fixed on the heavens, behold, two by appearance men, but in reality angels, stood beside them, asking why they looked up into heaven, and making them the revelation of His return. A fact very remarkable, since the Lord had, after the Lord's supper, made known to the disciples that He was going to the Father; and the first consolation He gave His disciples was that He would come again and take them to Himself in the Father's house, where He was going to prepare them a place; then He speaks of the presence of the Comforter which was to be accomplished. There He speaks of His coming to introduce His own into the Father's house; here, of His glorious appearing, when He will make Himself seen from the place where He has gone. There He Himself speaks of the special privilege of His own according to His personal affection which He had for them. He wished to console them, His heart had need of them; He desired to have them near to Himself, in the same glory, so that they might see His glory, but especially that, where He was, there they might be also. Here it is His return in glory, which would be like His going away.

This was the disciples' first consolation, once they were deprived of His presence. Then another Comforter would be given to dwell with them meanwhile here below. But whether in the declaration on the part of the Lord in His love, or in the revelation made by the angels, the first thing in the Saviour's heart and in the revelations of God is that He will come again. Immense is the gift of the Spirit during His absence, and for ever immense is the nature of the state in which redemption

has placed the assembly of God here below: but its hope is, and the height of its joy will be, to see the Saviour as He is, to be always with Him, like Him, to see and to be for ever with Him who does love us and has washed us from our sins in His own blood, and to see Him face to face! Greatest blessing, too great for us, if not the fruit of something still greater—the cross and the sufferings of the Son of God.

Once this blessed Saviour has suffered, and the Son of God has been made sin for us, and has died as a man on the cross, nothing is too great; it will only be the fruit of the travail of His soul. He shall be satisfied; His love shall be satisfied in our happiness and in our presence with Him. Look only at Zephaniah 3:17, where the love and the glory are inferior to this: “Jehovah thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing.” The Father will rest in His love, and in the accomplishment of all His counsels for the glory of His Son; shewing, at the same time, in the ages to come, the excellency of the riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. Such is our expectation.

The disciples return to Jerusalem, and live there together in an upper chamber. They persevered with one consent in supplication and prayer, with the women and with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and His brethren. But the effect of the promise of the Father is only found in chapter 2. All that we have at the end of chapter 1 is connected with a Jewish situation; that is, with the condition of the disciples before the coming of the Spirit, yet possessing an understanding which had been opened by the Lord to understand the word. They had not the

power of the Spirit, but intelligence of the word; because their standing was in relation with Christ raised up from the dead, they were enlightened by the divine light communicated to them after His resurrection. These verses accord perfectly with verses 14-48 of Luke 24. Then comes the promise of the Spirit, the accomplishment of which is found in chapter 2.

The well-known active energy of Peter employs the knowledge given by the Lord, applying Psalm 109 to Judas, whose office, says the psalm, another should take. They drew lots, according to Jewish custom, leaving the decision in the hands of God. Matthias is chosen and added to the eleven apostles. Verses 18, 19 are a parenthesis. The sabbath-day's journey, the lots, and all the circumstances, shew clearly the actual state of the disciples and the thought of the Holy Ghost on this step. They work with intelligence of the word of the Old Testament; but the Spirit had not yet come. It is important for us to understand the difference. The Spirit gives now intelligence (1 Cor. 2:14); but this is not of itself power.

The Lord is faithful to lead His own in the path of truth. His grace is sufficient, His strength is made perfect in weakness, and also He always gives us the strength necessary to accomplish His will; but the power of the Spirit is another thing. Now, we are specially called to follow His word, although we may be feeble (see what is said to the church of Philadelphia, Rev. 3).

It is impossible for Christ to fail us in our obedience, and His strength is sufficient for us. Faithful to His word, while we wait for Him in weakness, we shall be pillars in the temple of His God, when He sees the hour of glory.

Yet the Holy Ghost dwells in the faithful, sealed with Him by the Father according to His promise.

Chapter 2

The Coming of the Holy Ghost

But the great event of which we have spoken now claims our attention—the immense fact of the coming of the Holy Ghost to dwell with the disciples of Jesus, in each, and in the midst of all together. Thus, in 1 Corinthians 3:16, the church as a universal assembly is the temple of God; and then, in 1 Corinthians 6:19, the body of the faithful is the temple of God. All those who, steadfast in Jesus, habitually gathered together were thus assembled on the day of Pentecost. We have seen (chap. 1:14), that they continued with one accord in prayer while waiting for the Comforter, promised according to the word of Jesus.

Suddenly an impetuous wind is felt, filling all the house where they sat, as the cloud filled the tabernacle, so that the priests could not enter there (1 Kings 8:11). But now men themselves composed the tabernacle where God disdained not to dwell. The blood of Jesus had purified them, and rendered them fit to be the habitation of God through the Spirit (or in Spirit) Eph. 2:22. Marvellous truth, fruit of accomplished redemption, and blessed knowledge, that a Man, much more than a man, sits at the right hand of God (John 7:39). But how beautiful is the truth, this divine fact, that—such is the effect of the death and of the blood of Christ, and of our reconciliation and purification—instead of driving away the priests by His presence, God, in grace, makes us His habitation! What a contrast between the law and the gospel!

But, besides this, a marvellous testimony is found in this fact to the grace of God. The presence of the Holy Ghost depended on the sitting of the Man Jesus at the right hand of God; demonstration and fruit of the accomplishment of the work of redemption. Now this could not be limited to the Jewish people. This presence was in itself a testimony to that accomplishment, and the earnest of our inheritance, Christ being dead for all, and ascending into glory. For the moment, the patience of God fulfilled the work of grace among the Jews, people of the promises; but the gospel which should be preached was for the whole world.

When the judgment of God fell on man at the tower of Babel, it dispersed them, confounding their speech; but God took Abraham, separating him from his country and from his father's house, to have a seed and then a people for Himself. During many years God endured the iniquity and unfaithfulness of this people, sending prophets, till no further remedy could be found; at last He sent His own Son, and they, as we. know, rejected and crucified Him. Then the nation is put aside till the sovereign grace of God—His church, the fulness of the Gentiles, being gathered out—commences anew on the footing of the new covenant, and of the presence of the Messiah on the earth.

In the meantime He gathers together the heirs of Christ, the heavenly assembly. Thus—although for a moment the Spirit had separated in the midst of the Jews, spared as a nation by the intercession of Christ on the cross, till they should have rejected a glorified Christ in the same way that they had a crucified Christ come in humiliation: and also to gather together all those among this people that had ears to hear—it is shewn by the Spirit how the

God of grace was ready to overstep the limits of the chosen people and surmount the judgment of Babel, speaking to all the people in their own tongue—highest testimony of grace towards the world!

The barriers remained, but God surmounted them—passed over them—in order to announce the Saviour's grace and salvation unto the whole world. We also see this special gift every time that God intervenes anew, as in Samaria and in the house of Cornelius. In fact, it was impossible that a glorified Saviour should be only the Jewish Saviour. The history of this people, when they had rejected the Saviour, was finished, save by grace: and the eternal redemption of God could not be for the Jews alone.

The visible character that the Holy Ghost takes corresponds to this work. When it descended on Christ, the Spirit was like unto a dove, symbol of the meekness and sweet tranquillity of Him of whom it was written, "He shall not strive nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory" (Matt. 12:19, 20). But to the disciples He said, "That which I say in the darkness, tell it in the light; and that which ye have heard in the ear, proclaim it on the house-tops."

The Spirit came then as an impetuous wind, filling all the house, and as cloven tongues of fire. The partition was symbolical of the diverse languages, the fire of the penetrating power of the word of God, discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart. It seems to us, that not only the apostles, but all the one hundred and twenty, were invested with this power. They were all

together; and the explanation given by Peter of the prophecy of Joel confirms the matter (chaps. 1:14, 15; 2:1, 17).

They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak in strange tongues, according as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now, at Jerusalem, men of all countries were present, and the rumour of what had happened brought them together. This great crowd was astonished to hear each his own dialect, speaking together and saying, “Are not all these Galileans? How then do we hear each his own tongue?” They were in doubt, saying, “What meaneth this?” Others, cavilling, said, “They are full of new wine.” These were, especially the Jews, always prone to incredulity.

To them Peter replies, speaking firmly in their mother-tongue, and makes them understand that this was what Joel had said, prophesying that these things should happen in the last days. It is clear, on reading Joel, I doubt not, that the Holy Ghost will be poured out anew when Israel is re-established in its own land. It will then be the rain of the latter season. Remark that verse 30 of Joel 2 should come before those preceding. These things will happen before the terrible day of the Lord comes: but the blessings are after that day. Peter says, in a general way, “in the last days,” and speaks of judgment as yet to come, as in fact was the case.

But what is important in his discourse is the presentation to the conscience of the Jews of their actual position: because, whatever the case may be, God is always clear and positive in the declaration and in the setting out of the sins of those souls where grace works. In short, this was their position; they had outraged and

crucified Him whom God had set at His right hand, His own Son. Him they had put to death, and God had raised Him up, besides what had been demonstrated by the power manifested in His works. Horrible position! and we say it not only for the Jews, but for all men. Their Messiah, foundation of all their hopes, rejected; the Son of God put to death—a rupture which seemed irreparable between God and man; and on man's side, it was in fact irreparable.

All was lost. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and mankind had refused it. Sin was there, transgression against the law was already there: God had come in grace, and man had not received Him. Now He had gone back into heaven; but, blessed be His name, the counsels of God were not frustrated: far from that, they were accomplished. Grace had won the victory; and where man had manifested his enmity against God, God had manifested His love towards man, and accomplished the work for the salvation of believers in Christ. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by hand of lawless men have crucified and slain."

God has made use of the iniquity and enmity of man to accomplish the work of redemption. The enmity of man and the love of God were contrasted in the same fact on the cross, in the glorious manifestation that His love surpassed and surmounted the enmity of man. Woe to him who neglects and refuses this immense grace, this work alone efficacious for salvation!

Chapter 3.

The third chapter of the Acts is remarkable in the ways of God. The declaration is not found, as in the second, of

a present introduction of those who repent and confess the name of Jesus, into the blessings of the remission of sins, nor of the gift of the Holy Ghost. Peter shews, as in all his other discourses, that the death of Christ was the effect of the thoughts of God, though He was put to death by wicked hands: but rather as the accomplishment of prophecy than as the fruit of the counsels of God. The Spirit descends in virtue of the proclamation by the gospel of God's ways with Israel. The Lord, interceding on the cross for the people, had said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." His prayer was heard, and the judgment of God suspended in the design of presenting repentance to the people once more.

God knew well that the Jews, hard of heart, would not receive the merciful voice of the long-suffering of God; and had warned those who had ears to hear (chap. 2:40) to save themselves from this untoward generation. But He would not come to judge till everything possible had been done, and they had rejected a glorified Christ, as they had rejected a Christ come in humiliation here below. The Spirit, therefore, by the mouth of Peter, starting from the intercession of Christ, proposes repentance to the people, saying, that then Christ would return. The apostle enters more particularly into the sin of the Jews, and presents the facts with great power to their consciences.

It may seem strange that the apostle should speak of the repentance of all the people, and of sparing them, when the Christian assembly had already commenced, and he had warned them to avoid the judgment which was ready to fall on a people which had crucified the Lord of glory. But God knew well that the rulers of the people

would render His grace vain; and reject the testimony of a glorified Christ, as they had put to death a Christ present in grace. He prosecuted His counsels according to His own knowledge, but He did not carry out the judgment of His government till everything possible had been done to spare man, inviting them to repentance.

Thus Abraham was told that his seed must descend into Egypt because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet accomplished (Gen. 15:16). And Jeremiah (chaps. 7-14, and in other places) does precisely what Peter does; he says clearly by his prophetical knowledge that the people and the vessels of the temple would go into Babylon: at the same time he exhorts the people to repent, and that thus doing they would be spared. And it is laid down as a principle, that when Jehovah had pronounced the condemnation of a people or of a city, if that people or that city should repent of its wickedness, He would turn away from the judgment that He had pronounced (Jer. 18:7-11). Thus, then, the apostle exhorts the people to repent, and Christ would return.

Going up to the temple, the apostles Peter and John had healed a man, lame from his birth, who asked alms at the gate called “Beautiful.” The man goes up together with the apostles, leaping and praising God; a crowd naturally gathers, as the man was well known. Peter takes advantage of the occasion to put before the eyes of the people what had been done. It was not by his own power. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of their fathers, had raised up His servant Jesus, whom they had put to death. Horrible position! what open opposition! fatal—if grace had not been there among the people of God.

It is thus that Peter always presents the truth. They had rejected Him, and God had recognised and glorified Him. And here he enters much more particularly into their sin, more than in chapter 2. He presents the facts with great power to their consciences. They had betrayed the Lord, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate when he had decided to let Him go. They had denied the Holy One and the Just, had desired a murderer, and killed the Prince of Life. But God had raised Him up—once more opposition between the people and God. The name of the risen Saviour at the right hand of God had given to the cripple the perfect health in which they saw him. And here the Spirit responds in grace to the Lord's intercession; and the apostle attributes to ignorance the terrible fact of having rejected the Lord, whether on the part of the rulers or of the people.

That which had been foreordained by God was now accomplished—the sufferings of Christ announced before by their prophets; and, if they repented, Jesus would come back: God would send Him from heaven. Those times of blessing that would be fulfilled on the earth by His presence they would have; times that might come on the Lord's side, but for which the repentance of Israel was absolutely necessary, and for which it is still necessary. That always remains true. Their house, said the Lord, should be left unto them desolate, until they should say, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of Jehovah" (Matt. 23:38, quoting Psalm 118).

When Israel repents, the Lord will come, and they will own that He whom they had rejected was the Lord Himself; and they will be full of sorrow and shame, but be pardoned and liberated; and all the blessings, of

which the prophets have spoken, shall be fulfilled. Meanwhile heaven held Jesus hid from the eyes of men. But Peter presents this repentance to the Jews, and the present return besides.

But before he could finish his discourse, the rulers of the Jews arrive, take possession of the apostles, and throw them into prison. Jesus glorified is refused, as completely as Jesus in humiliation. All is finished for Israel, with respect to its responsibility—the marvellous patience of God, and the grace that had made intercession for the beloved people on the cross. Nothing more could be done: it only remained to carry out the judgment of a people who would not have grace. Such is the history alas! of the natural man.

Let us mark this, that here the Holy Ghost is not offered, as in the discourse of the preceding chapter, which began the new order of the ways of God; but he speaks of the return of Christ Himself to accomplish all that the prophets had said. The presence of the Holy Ghost distinguishes the time between the first and the second coming of Jesus—the present interval. I do not say that the Spirit will not be poured out after the second coming; but the coming and presence of Jesus distinguished that period, and His absence the present, as moreover the presence of another Comforter instead of Him. And this reveals to us a Christ glorified in the heavens, makes Him the object of a living faith, unites us to Him, makes us understand that we are children of God, joint-heirs with Christ, that we are in Him and He in us, and mikes us members of His body, while we wait for Him to take us to Himself. The love of God, too, is shed abroad in our hearts.

Although Peter never speaks of the rapture of the saints to be with Jesus, yet we may turn to 1 Peter 1:11-13, where we find the testimony of the prophets, that of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, and the accomplishment of the promises to happen on the appearing of Jesus—the three things which appear here. It is not a question of gathering believers to Christ, nor of the coming of the Holy Ghost. We find ourselves entirely on Jewish ground. And God, having first raised up His servant Jesus, had sent Him to bless them, that is, down here in the world; and as they would not receive Him, repentance was offered them. But the rulers interposed, resisting the Holy Ghost, just as they had refused Christ on the earth, thus sealing their own judgment. The final sentence will be found in the history of Stephen.

Another truth is introduced here, which is not wanting in importance in the ways of God; though it may not be equal in importance to the moral state of men which led them to reject the Lord come in grace. After this moment the throne and the government of God cannot be found on the earth. The providence of God watches over all; not even a little bird falls to the ground without His hand. But this throne does not exist on the earth, and will no more exist till the Lord Jesus, the Son of David, establishes it, till He comes to whom it belongs. The throne of God, between the cherubim, was taken away from Jerusalem when the Jews were led captive into Babylon; but a little remnant of the Jews was brought back to Jerusalem, in order to present to them again their true King, the Son of David, Jesus of Nazareth. But they would not receive Him. Thenceforward the kingdom of God is changed to the

kingdom of heaven; the King is in heaven, and the kingdom is like the grain of wheat, which, once sown, springs and grows, without man's hand being applied to it (Mark 4:26). Christ works; without His grace nothing would be done; but He does not appear. He sits on the throne of God, and has not taken His own throne; He will take it when He returns.

Thrones are perfectly established by God; the Christian recognises fully the authority of princes and governors as ordinances of God, and submits to them. But it is not the immediate kingdom of God. From the captivity of Babylon till the coming of Christ are the "times of the Gentiles"; and God gathers the joint-heirs of Christ, who are not of this world, as He was not. They are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; they will reign with Him in glory, joint-heirs by grace of the inheritance of God.

There are two great subjects in the Bible, after personal salvation; the divine government of the world with the Jews as centre, under Christ; and the sovereign grace that has given those who are content to suffer with Him the same glory that Christ enjoys as Man, predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He may be the first-born among many brethren. Already we enjoy the same relationship with His God and Father. "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Already children and heirs here below, when Christ comes we shall rejoice with heavenly joy with Him, and we shall reign with Him.

The Jews, and with them the Gentiles on the earth, will enjoy the peace and blessings resulting from the reign of

Christ. Chapter 2, though it does not go any farther than to the presence of the Spirit here below, speaks of the first and heavenly position; chapter 3 of the second. The word of God in chapter 2 brings forth its fruit in gathering souls for God's assembly, and for heavenly glory. In chapter 3 the call to repentance is refused on the authority of the people; and the Lord sits at the right hand of God in heaven till His enemies are made His footstool.

And the work of God goes on here below. The reign of Christ on the earth is deferred because of the unbelief of the Jews; and the presence of the Spirit, Christ being in heaven, to gather together the heavenly citizens, and to put them into a new, eternal, and heavenly relationship with God—this is the foundation of the history recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The following chapters unfold the progress of the work, its difficulties and their causes. "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son [servant] Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."

Chapter 4.

What we read in this chapter is very sad, but full of instruction. The state of Israel is frightful, and the contrast to the apostles, and to all the believers marvellous. There is ecclesiastical authority and hatred of the truth and of the Lord on one side, and the presence and power of God on the other. Authority, depending on public opinion, is timorous at this juncture, and for a moment by this means held in check by the hand of God; and the courage of faith, given by God, is sustained by the powerful presence of the Holy Ghost.

The priests deliberately resist the action of the Holy Ghost though admitting that the power of God had been manifested. Is it not frightful? Oh what audacity, of what malice, is the heart of man capable when abandoned by God and left to its own hatred against Him! “The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquities be found to be hateful,” Psalm 36:1, 2. And for what follows see also Luke 12:1-12. Horrible and vain opposition, for the word of God will be fulfilled in spite of men. If we suffer, it is our glory. Our portion is to be found in Psalm 27; and then in Psalm 37: “Fret not thyself—trust in Jehovah—delight thyself also in Jehovah—commit thy way unto Jehovah—rest in Jehovah, and wait patiently for Him—cease from anger and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.”

We shall see the path of the apostles; what courage, what tranquillity, what clearness of judgment, doing exactly what became servants of God—those who, in the testimony of God, represented Him on the earth! Doubtless an extraordinary power was displayed in them, but the principle is just the same for us all. Moreover the word did not remain without effect, the number of men who had believed became about five thousand.

We have seen that the chief priests had put the apostles in prison. The morning came, they meet at Jerusalem, and make the apostles appear before them. They demand by what power and in what name they had done the miracle. The old story is again repeated—official authority opposed to the power of God. Thus the high priests and the rulers of the people demanded of the

Lord by what authority He worked. But what madness, what hardness of heart, what lack of conscience! A miracle had evidently been performed by the apostles: it was known by the people, and they could not deny it. It is God Himself who works, but they will not allow the knowledge of it to spread among the people. It was not convenient that the power of God should be manifested outside their office; for if divine power operated outside their office, they could no longer secure authority to themselves. But it was not for them to command God; and not only this, but they were directly opposed to that power which was of God.

In such cases absence of all conscience is always found, as when the Lord did not reply to their questions, but, in His divine wisdom, asked them what the baptism of John was. And they, fearing the people, dared not say that it was not of God, because public opinion was against them. They were forced to acknowledge their incapacity; evidently, then, the Lord was not bound to account to them for what He had just before done.

Here something more is found. What the apostles had done was an act of power and not of authority, and the priests place themselves in open opposition to God. They would have suppressed His power if they had been able; otherwise they were humiliated. This was necessary, for the miracle had been performed in the name of Him whom they had crucified. They were adversaries of God, and adversaries consciously and willingly, for they had acknowledged that it was impossible to deny the miracle. This was indeed the power of Satan, but also of an office destitute of the power of God. Whenever man finds himself in such a position, he is unwilling that God

should work. But what a state of soul, what a frightful condition!

Let us contemplate the spectacle of an unlettered and ignorant man, but believing in Jesus and full of the Holy Ghost. He announces openly, and with frank candour, not only that it was by the name of Jesus that the man had been cured, but that He was the stone set at nought by the builders, now become the head of the corner, and that there was no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. The position of the rulers is clearly established, such as we have seen it. The man there present had been cured by the name of Him whom they had crucified, and whom God had raised from among the dead.

But alas! the will of men was not moved, though they had nothing to say against the facts. The power of God was there; the testimony could not be refuted; but they would not have divine testimony. And, having conferred together, they dismissed them, “straitly threatening them that they should speak henceforth to no man in this name.”

Their part was taken against God and against His Anointed. They commanded the apostles, therefore, when they had brought them in again, never to speak again in this name. Peter does not boast, does not insist on his rights or on his liberty, does not threaten the priests and council, does not shew on his part any of his own will; he remains tranquil in obedience, but in obedience to God rather than to man. God was with them; the others were only men. They must obey God. He appeals to the priests and themselves, if it was not right to do so. Again they threaten them and let them

go; witnesses were before them who glorified God for what had been done.

It is well to remark that the apostles do not assail the Jews— they do their duty; and when these oppose themselves, conscious of doing the will of God sent by Him, they declare that necessarily they were doing His will—that, when God willed and sent, they had to obey. It is the calm, the tranquillity, of him who does not think of himself, either through fear or through human ardour. It is full of the Holy Ghost; what is said, what is done, comes from Him. Such a man works perfectly on God's side, because the man is put aside, and God by His Spirit works in him. Though it may be the man who presents himself perfectly in the position in which he finds himself, yet it is that Spirit who produces the perfection in him. "It is not ye," said the Lord, "that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you," Matt. 10:20. If man works, then there is imperfection. God works in man, and then man is what he ought to be. Is it always thus?

But the miserable position of the Jews unfolds itself only too clearly. God was no longer to be found among the chosen people who had rejected their Messiah, the Son of God, in whom are all the promises of God; and now they were abandoned. God dwelt by His Spirit among the Christians. God will fulfil His promises to the nation in the last times, but then it will be in pure grace. He is faithful, whatever may be the iniquity of His people. What Peter proposed to Israel in chapter 3, repentance, will be accomplished in their hearts by grace, when the assembly of God shall have been taken up into heaven. Then they shall see Him whom they have pierced, and shall be blessed; but meanwhile they are put aside, kept

apart however, till the fulness of the Gentiles be brought in. Then Israel as a whole shall be saved. But now they are displayed as resisting the Holy Ghost, as having rejected the Messiah. Now we see the power of the Spirit and His presence manifesting itself in the midst of the assembly.

The apostles returned to “their own”; for now there existed a company, a society, the house of God; composed, it is true, of Jews, but apart, outside the national pale. There they recount what has happened. Then, moved by the Holy Ghost, with one heart they raise the voice to God, acknowledging the accomplishing of Psalm 2, where the rejection of the Messiah, the Son of God is announced, and the absolute power of God, whatever might be the wickedness of men who did nothing but fulfil the counsels of God. Nevertheless they do not ask that the kingdom should be established, according to what is said in that Psalm, of which kingdom the Father has put the times into His own power (chap 1:7); but the manifestation of the power of the Holy Ghost is pronounced in the same place, whether in the full courage to announce the word, or in the works of power done in the name of the holy servant of God, Jesus, His Son.

After they have prayed, the presence of God is manifested in their midst, and the place where they are assembled shakes. Here too, is seen, in an exterior way, the difference between the new birth and the presence of God by the Spirit. Many more important proofs of it are to be found; but I speak of it, because here it is an outward sign, impossible to confound with the work of grace in the soul. Their prayer is heard. They are all filled with the Holy Ghost, and speak the word of God

with great boldness. But it is not only in the gifts of speech; it is the faith which does it all, that shews the effect and the power of being filled with the Holy Ghost. We find a work of the same character in the description given in chapter 2: there was but one heart.

No one retained his own property, but distributed to those who were in need. With great power the apostles bore testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was on them all. None among the disciples lacked anything. Those who possessed lands or houses sold them, and laid the prices of the things that were sold at the apostles' feet, who distributed to every one according to his need. Beautiful testimony of the power of love, the love of God shed abroad by the Holy Ghost in the hearts of those who were filled with it! Among the others we find Barnabas, especially noticed here, because we shall find him soon occupied in the work of God, the companion of Paul; so that he is called an apostle. But God has not forgotten the others.

Such is the scene which passes before our eyes when the church was established in the beginning—when the Spirit, ungrieved, displayed all the effect of His presence. Most blessed scene, giving us to understand what it is to be filled with the Holy Ghost! He dwells in every true Christian; but it is another thing to be so filled with Him that He may be the source of all that is thought, of all that is done, and that all that the heart, which is His vessel, produces may be the fruit of His presence; that there may be no doubting, no shutting up in the career of love, that Jesus may be faithfully confessed before men. The heart is set free from its own love, and loves according to the love of Christ. Liberty,

true liberty, is found, and the practical life, and its fruits are the fruits of the Spirit.

What a blessed state! And whatever may be the ruin of the church, in principle this state belongs to-day to every Christian; circumstances may hinder the form that existed in the days of the apostles; but the Spirit of God, at the bottom, is more powerful than circumstances.

Chapter 5.

Although a man may be truly a Christian, yet the flesh always remains in him, which is just as ready to shew itself in the assembly as in the world. The desire to have a good reputation among men may arise in the heart, although such a reputation may merely be sought for among Christians. Thus too it happened when the assembly of God first began. Love produced the inclination to think of others rather than of themselves. But the flesh also would have the reputation of doing so, without denying itself, deceitfully thinking to keep back its money, and at the same time to gain the benefit of a reputation for giving it away. But here also the great truth of the presence of the Holy Ghost is the subject of God’s revelation given in this book.

Ananias and Sapphira have lied to the Holy Ghost: this is the gravity of the sin of Ananias and his wife. God dwelt in the midst of His own in the assembly. Deceived in heart and conscience by cupidity, whether of money or of human glory, Ananias did not recognise His presence. But still another was acting in this sad event. Satan suggested to them the means of keeping back the money, and still of winning fame. But the Holy Ghost was there, and the folly of men and malice of Satan did nothing but make manifest the truth and the power of

His presence, in a sad way it is true, but in a way that could leave no doubt of it.

Ananias, whose sin was thus unexpectedly to himself revealed, falls dead by the judgment of God who was there. But what a solemn judgment! And it is not surprising if, not only the Christians, but also the outside world, were terrified at such a testimony to the presence of God that was entirely unmistakable. Moreover the sin was not a simple failure. Ananias and Sapphira had agreed together in their eagerness of endeavour to deceive God, forgetting that He knew everything and that He was there.

But, however sad and solemn the fact might be, it was a testimony from which it was impossible to detract, that God Himself was present; a testimony to the great truth that God, in the person of the Holy Ghost, had come down to dwell in the midst of His people, and for ever (John 14:17), so that they might be taken up to dwell in the Father's house. The apostles were filled with it; everything at that time was in the power of it. But the assembly of God has been unfaithful; the Spirit has been grieved, and therefore we see no longer those actions which bore testimony to His presence.

This, nevertheless, does not in any way render it invalid — that would be impossible. The word of Christ is—He shall dwell with you; and the Spirit is as able to accomplish the will of God in His children now as in the time of the apostles, though it may not be shewn in the same manner. But it is more blessed, says the Lord, to have our names written in heaven than to cast out demons: and by the true work of God in souls, and in all His ways, He manifests His presence in the assembly,

and in Christians who depend on Him, and are filled with Him, just as much as He did in the days of the apostles. It is not proper that it should be shewn outwardly in the fallen church as in the faithful assembly long ago established by God Himself, as though He sealed its fall with His approbation. But God changes not, and His grace and power are the same, and are as available as ever for all that is necessary and all that is suitable to the state of the church; and He still does all that is requisite for His glory and our full blessing. He works in His own with the same power according to the circumstances in which they are placed.

Now many signs and wonders were wrought by the hands of the apostles, who were to be found habitually (it seems to us) in Solomon's porch in the temple. The great and the rulers did not dare to identify themselves with them; but the people, convinced in their simplicity, increased the number and importance of the Christians in the holy city. We see always fear on the part of the great and of the ecclesiastical rulers. They could persecute, but they could not join the Christians, because then their power would be compromised. As Paul says, "not many mighty, not many noble, are called." The reproach of Christ is always linked to His name, wherever there is fidelity.

But still the power of God manifested itself in such a way that in Jerusalem and in the cities round about they brought sick folks, so that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them; and the sick of the city and those vexed with unclean spirits were all healed. But all this excited the envy and indignation of the chief priests; the divine power and authority had evidently passed away from their hands,

and they were unwilling that they should be found elsewhere. They could not prevent God from manifesting His power, but they could take possession of the persons who exercised it, at least when God allowed it. They do so, and throw the apostles into the common prison.

But this did nothing more than prepare the way for another display of the hand and power of God. When God is working, vain are the efforts of men. We have seen, and shall see, the internal power of the Holy Ghost. Here we find angels, the servants of God, in favour of the men who preach the good news of salvation through Christ. I do not doubt that they ever minister, according to the will of God, to all His children who walk in the way of His will; and they may be employed otherwise, if it please God, as it is written in Hebrews I. But here they operate in a visible way. The angel opens the doors of the prison, leads the apostles out, and tells them to go their way, and to speak in the temple all the words of this life, which they do at once at break of day.

Meanwhile the high priest and they that were with him meet together in the great council of the Jews, and send the sergeants, commanding them to bring the apostles before them. They go therefore to the prison, which they find shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors, but no prisoners within. The priests, confounded, know not what to think. Who can make war against God, and not find himself discomfited? Satan can do much, he can persecute and exercise great influence over unbelieving souls; but, where the working of the power of God is present, he cannot surmount it. Confidence is found on the part of God’s servants; and, at the bottom of their heart, the adversaries are afraid

and perplexed. See Josh. 2:9; Phil, 1:23; 1 Pet. 3:6. Satan had the Sadducees ready to resist the work of the apostles who presented the resurrection, as the Pharisees to oppose Christ who preached true righteousness.

But the work of God goes on in the midst of suffering. He allows His own to suffer; it is given to them to suffer for the name of Christ; but He accomplishes His counsels in spite of man. The officers then brought them without violence, fearing the people lest they should have been stoned. The apostles appear before the council, and the high priest reproves them, because they had preached Jesus, in spite of the prohibition, and that thus they thought to bring the blood of Jesus on them. It is apparent that their conscience was ill at ease. The simple truth was that they were responsible for the blood of Jesus; but when a man is spurred on by Satan to commit a crime, he does not fear to do it, but, once committed, the deceit of Satan leaves him; the crime weighs on his conscience, and Satan cannot alleviate it, but often goads him to desperation, as he did with Judas.

The reply of Peter to the rulers is very brief and decisive; already they knew it well. “We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them who obey him.” When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.

But here again the hand of God appears; and as He had miraculously used an angel to let Peter out of prison, so now He employs the hand of man to arrest the power and the malice of the elders and high priest. The human prudence of the Pharisee Gamaliel, a man much esteemed, gives them to realise, by several examples, the peril of putting themselves in conflict with God. The Pharisees were always opposed to the Sadducess, and the high priest belonged to the sect of the Sadducees, so that the Pharisee could always employ his human sagacity to gain a hearing. And God could use it to preserve His servants from the wicked hand of their enemies.

They consent to the counsel of Gamaliel, but without any fear of God. The will is not changed, the enmity against the testimony of God remains in all its force; but they are afraid of compromising themselves, and know not what to do. The aposdes are beaten, and forbidden to speak in the name of Jesus. It is enmity without strength, without conscience, and without knowledge, blind from unbelief, and resisting in vain the power of God! The apostles continue their work, teaching and preaching both in the temple and in every house.

Chapters 6, 7.

But the flesh manifests itself in Christians, and the more so if their number be large. Now we find a new event happening; in the multitude the power of faith and the fruits of the Spirit begin to grow feebler. Love and confidence —love’s constant companion—diminish; but at the same time the strength of the Spirit found in the apostles takes its stand against difficulty. And not only this, but an opportunity is given for securing greater

regularity in the daily ministration of the assembly. The preaching of the word is separated from the care of the poor. In this case the apostles desired that the people should choose those who might care for the widows. We shall see farther on that the apostle Paul himself, with Barnabas, appointed elders, but, when it was a question of money, neither the twelve nor Paul would take any part in it, nor confound the divine service of the word with the administration of the money furnished by the faithful; 1 Corinthians 16.

The twelve desired to be occupied only with the word, and Paul would not charge himself with the money for the poor at Jerusalem, unless brethren appointed for this purpose were with him. But, although the flesh shewed itself, the Spirit was enough to overrule circumstances. In the case of Ananias and Sapphira this power and the presence of the Spirit was manifested in judgment against hypocrisy; here we find it seeking to make its way in the assembly, producing order and right where danger of disunion was manifested in the midst of the disciples.

But another principle respecting the Holy Ghost, easy to believe but often forgotten, is now made evident—His full liberty: as we read in 1 Corinthians 12, “dividing to every man severally as he will.” We have seen up to this moment the activity of the apostles, established in their office by the Lord Himself, if we except Matthias. We find now seven men, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom, chosen by the people to serve at the tables where the distributions were made to the poor widows; and among these were two specially used by the Holy Ghost in the preaching of the gospel; and, at this moment, Stephen. In 1 Timothy 3:13, we find, “For they

that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good decree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Stephen was already a man full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, but now his gift is unfolded. He does signs and wonders; even his adversaries could not resist the power and wisdom with which he spoke. The Holy Ghost here works freely as in Philip. He also was obliged to give up his office for the work of evangelisation, for he went to Samaria. By the liberty given by the Spirit he is a minister of the word, and not of the tables. It is a new phase of the work of grace and of the Spirit. We shall find still other proofs. It is a very important principle, the truth and force of which extend to the present day. They are not sent by the apostles but directly by God. It is the strength of the Holy Ghost that urges them to the work, consecration to Christ, and love of souls.

It seems also that Stephen had said more, and spoken more openly, than Peter. The latter ever bore testimony to Israel's open opposition to God, for they had crucified Him whom God had exalted to His own right hand. We know not how Stephen spoke; but at all events he gave rise to the accusation of having said that Jesus would destroy Jerusalem, and change the customs which Moses had established. Evidently he always preached Christ and His glory, as did Peter; but he said more—he warned the people of the consequences of their sin. Peter laid down the fundamental truth that shewed the state of the Jews before God. Stephen, taking lower ground and speaking more familiarly, announces the consequences of non-repentance. Both testimonies were fully of God, and inspired, but differed in character.

The accusations being brought before the council, Stephen is seized and forced to appear before the high priest and his accusers. To these there only remained enmity against God, and the power of death, for God allowed them to fulfil their purposes. But the occasion produces the magnificent defence of Stephen, indicating the position of the Jews with the utmost precision, and closing the history of humanity, of man before God here below. Before the flood God bore testimony, but He established no institution. We have perhaps Adam, Abel, Enoch and Noah, godly men, but not one of them was the head of a race according to God; but after the flood God began in the new world to found institutions for the government of the world, for the blessing of man, and to unfold truth and His ways.

At first no promise was made to man. In the judgment pronounced on Satan we find a prophecy of the final work of Christ, the object, by grace, of Adam's faith, and also of ours, the everlasting gospel; but God made no promises to the first man. After the flood God began to unfold His ways. In Noah He established government in order to restrain violence. Then, when man fell into idolatry (Josh. 24), not only was he wicked, but he chose demons as the power of the world in place of God; and God called Abraham to be for Himself, and the father of a race that He might on earth recognise as His, whether after the flesh or after the Spirit. The great principles of election, of calling, or of the promises are established. Then the law is given on Mount Sinai, by which man is put to the proof in a still more definite manner. Then, after long patience, in which prophets were sent to recall the people chosen according to the flesh to the obedience of the law, and sustain the trust of the few

faithful by the promise of the Messiah, God sent His only-begotten Son, His well-beloved, saying, in the words of the parable, “They will reverence my Son”; but we know what happened. The history of man was finished on the cross. Not only had he sinned, but he had rejected grace when the Saviour had come.

Now they reject the testimony that spoke of a glorified Saviour, sent in virtue of His intercession on the cross, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” As we have seen, God replied to this intercession in the testimony of Peter and of the apostles; and in the announcement of the Holy Ghost of a glorified Saviour,Him whom they had rejected; but, as we have again seen, they refused the testimony of the Holy Ghost by the mouth of the apostles.

And here we have a kind of resume, an explanation of their state, their history from the time of Abraham till that day. It is the history of man from the moment that God began His dealings with him—in the beginning, in giving the promise, whether to Israel or to Christ, the true offspring; then in the law, in the prophets, and, finally, in Christ Himself. All this time the Spirit was working, and now especially, after Christ had been glorified in heaven, as we have seen. Stephen recounted this history; grace in the call of Abraham; what happened to Joseph and to Moses, wherein the Spirit worked and had been rejected by Israel; then the law violated at the outset in the calf of gold; then the prophets; then Christ Himself; and, finally, the testimony of the Holy Ghost. They had broken the law, persecuted and put to death the prophets who had spoken of the coming of the Just One, of whom now they had become the betrayers and murderers. And more than this, they

still resisted the Holy Ghost, as their fathers had always done.

All the dealings of God pass before our eyes; the law, the prophets, Christ, the Spirit. In all, the people are found in enmity against God. Meanwhile they confided in the temple, of which God had declared by the prophet that the Most High dwelt not in temples made with hands. Such is the history of Israel—of man. Conscience is hardened, will is unchanged in the Sanhedrim, and nothing but hate and opposition to the testimony of the Holy Ghost is revealed; their hearts are goaded to resistance, and put the witness himself to death. They were unable to answer him; it was indeed their history of which they so loudly boasted—and what a history! Man always resists the testimony of the Spirit; and, if the conscience be stung, hatred breaks out violently against the witness.

On the other hand we see a man, a Christian, full of the Holy Ghost, doubtless here manifested in a very special way; but that which was visible to Stephen is the object of faith for us. Mark first the perfect tranquillity of the servant of Christ. With beautiful simplicity he tells a story familiar to all—a story, however, which carried with it the condemnation of the Jews. To reason with him was needless, for they could not deny the facts. Then, kneeling down quietly amid the stones which fell on him, he prays for his enemies. What moral power! How entirely it overcomes all circumstances, and displays the man of God in the presence of the fury of his adversaries!

But let us examine not only the character of Stephen’s testimony against his enemies, but his own state. He is

the embodiment of a man full of the Holy Ghost, and his enemies are the embodiment of men who resist the Spirit. First, heaven is opened to him; he is enabled to keep his eyes fixed on the heavens—touch-stone of the state of the soul—and sees the Son of man standing at the right hand of God. He saw indeed the glory of God, but does not speak of it; the new and blessed thing was, that Man, in the person of the Son of God, stood there.

I believe that here He does not sit, because, until the Jews had refused the testimony of His glory, the Saviour was expecting to come back according to the address of Peter. As soon as Stephen is slain this testimony is at end; and, a single soul in heaven, the gathering of the spirits of the redeemed begins, which will continue till the Lord comes to re-unite the bodies and spirits of His own, and bring them into heavenly glory. Thus, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is said that Jesus is set down at the right hand of God, expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. He sits down on the throne of the Father, and not yet on His own. This is what rouses the hatred and fury of the Jews. They cry out “blasphemy!” and stone the witness of God, of the glory of Jesus.

For Stephen heaven is opened, and Jesus is seen in divine glory; and this is what forms his soul in such a beautiful way into the likeness of Jesus. As He prayed for enemies, so also Stephen prays for his; and as the Lord Jesus commended His spirit to His Father, so Stephen exclaims, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Not only does he pardon his enemies, but quietly kneels down to do so. The view of Jesus transforms the heart into His likeness. That which was seen by Stephen is the object of faith for us, made clearer by what happened to him.

Chapter 8.

An important fact, which renders the signification of our narrative still clearer, is here presented to us. Here we find Saul taking part in the death of Stephen. We have seen that the death of Stephen was the end of the history of the enmity of the human heart against God, when God had done everything to try it, and also to restore it; its incurable enmity was manifested, and the end of man before God. There was no longer hope of finding any good since God Himself has made use of everything—judgment in the deluge, the law, the prophets, His own Son, and the testimony of the Holy Ghost. All was in vain. The more God worked, the more man's enmity manifested itself.

Here for the first time we find Saul. Not content with taking part in the death of Stephen, he goes into distant cities in search of Christians to bring them bound to Jerusalem. He is the apostle of man's enmity against Christ. If the history of man was finished, that of the sovereign grace of God was beginning. The spirit of the first martyr takes its place in the presence of Jesus. But the entire number must be completed before Jesus can come and re-unite them with their bodies.

Here we find the first general persecution, which, however, in the hands of God, served to scatter the seed of the gospel. This also is a proof of the free activity of the Holy Ghost to make use of whomsoever He sees fit to select. Still another important fact: while all the Christians are scattered by the persecution, the apostles remain at Jerusalem. The special mission of Matthew 10:23 was not accomplished. It will be by the power of God hereafter, I doubt not; but not at the moment of

which we read here. It is the multitude of Christians scattered by the persecution who preach the gospel in Palestine, and afterwards among the Gentiles. Saul persecutes the assembly with cruel zeal; and the Christians leave the city. It was neither the settled design of man, nor the spiritual zeal of the apostles, but the fury of the enemy, which according to the wisdom of God first disseminated the gospel outside the gates of Jerusalem. The spirit of Stephen gone up to heaven, the gospel of grace is carried into the surrounding districts by means of the enmity of man, and the providence of God who makes use of it leads the scattered ones to communicate in love the gifts they possess. What is man? and what the wisdom and grace of God?

Another example of the free activity of the Spirit is found in the person of Philip, chosen to take care of the widows. His service is finished with regard to the widows; but he has acquired a good degree, and great liberty in the faith in Christ Jesus. Setting out from Jerusalem, he goes down to Samaria; and there by the power of his word, and by the miracles given him to do, the people are liberated from the influence of a notorious instrument of Satan—Simon, who exercised the arts of sorcery and had been held to be the great power of God. “Then Simon himself believed also; and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.”

It was the miracles which had exercised this influence over his spirit, not the seed of God, the divine word which had entered into his heart. To believe by means of miracles alone is not the faith which operates by the Holy Ghost, although God may work miracles and signs

in order to confirm His word. The end of John 2 shews that Jesus did not trust those who had believed in this way. When the Spirit of God works, requirements are produced in the soul which Jesus alone can satisfy. Thus Nicodemus was under the influence of the miracles when he went to Jesus. To the others reasonable conviction sufficed, and they remained where they were.

The sole desire of Simon is to possess the power of conferring on others by the imposition of his hands the ability to work miracles and signs. He wished to buy it with money, thereby shewing that there was no work of God in his soul. He had “neither part nor lot in this matter.” He was in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity; his heart was not right before God. His sin excited the indignation, not the compassion, of Peter. “Thy money perish with thee,” said he. But still his heart is not touched with compunction. He asks only that what had been said might not come upon him; not that his thought might be forgiven, or that the state of his heart might be changed.

Here we find still other things which we shall do well to consider. The difference between the operation and the sealing of the Spirit is very clear. The Samaritans had believed and had been baptized, but had not received the Holy Ghost; for He had not yet descended upon them. He had worked by the word in their hearts; men and women were converted, born again, had confessed the name of Jesus; but they were not yet sealed. Then it belonged in a special manner to the apostles to impose hands, and confer the gift of the Spirit. In Acts 19 we see that Paul conferred it; he was a true apostle. Ananias was sent that Saul might receive it; this was a special mission of the Lord Himself. The Spirit might

also come without the laying on of hands, as on the hundred and twenty, and on Cornelius; but not one had the power of conferring it save the apostles. It is said, “of the apostles’ hand” (v. 18).

It is possible, too, that the Spirit might come on a man in this way without an internal work giving life. The Lord does not habitually work thus; but cases of it are not wanting in the Old Testament, such as Balaam, king Saul, and others, where the question of conversion is not raised, shewing that that is another thing altogether. In the New Testament we do not find a case of it, but the thing is supposed (1 Cor. 12; Heb. 6), and the power to do miracles with the aid of the Holy Ghost and without conversion and life, is clearly presented by the Lord Himself (Matt. 12:26, 27); the Lord does not deny the fact, but declares that He knows not those who have done them; Matt. 7. See Deut. 13. Judas at least was sent to do such.

We see then a new character of the apostolic authority; then the free activity of the Spirit clearly displayed in Philip. By his means the gospel is communicated to a distant country through a proselyte come to Jerusalem to worship the true God; a man in whose heart the word of God possessed full power. It is beautiful to remark in Philip the readiness of his obedience—how he allowed himself to be led by the will of God. He is the object of all attention in the city of Samaria: a notable work had been done by means of him. “Arise,” said the angel of the Lord, “and go unto Gaza, which is desert”; but he was not told what he was to do there. And he goes there immediately. There he finds the treasurer of the Queen of Ethiopia. The Spirit says to him, “Go near and join thyself to this chariot”; and he runs immediately to it.

The treasurer was reading the word of God, but the key of faith in Jesus was wanting. Philip mounts the chariot, and preaches faith in Jesus to him. All was ordered by God. He was reading what was immediately connected with the sufferings of the Lord; and by the power of the Spirit the explanation of the passage is sent him by the mouth of Philip. The eunuch, with the heart prepared by grace, and already having faith in the word, becomes a Christian. He is baptized by Philip, and goes on his way rejoicing. It is remarkable that the name of Christianity remains to this day in that country, much corrupted (it is true), but in the form which this man implanted. They believe as to the profession of Christ, but practise circumcision—(verse 37 is not authentic). The Spirit of the Lord catches away Philip, and by the miraculous power of God he is found at Azotus. Time and space are nothing to God. From Azotus he evangelises in all the cities till he comes to Caesarea. Further on we find him stationed with his family at this city. He had by this time obtained the fair name of Evangelist.

Chapter 9.

We have glanced at the history of the free activity of the Spirit in those who were dispersed by the persecution, in Stephen, and in Philip. Then follows the deeply interesting narrative of Saul and of his conversion. In that of Stephen we saw that man had reached the extreme end of his iniquity, not only in crucifying the Lord, but in refusing the offer of grace, and of His return in virtue of the Saviour’s intercession on the cross. There, for the first time, we find Saul; but he is not content with this quiet hatred. “And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of

the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that, if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem."

He is the apostle, of his own will, of hatred against Christ, and of the persecution of God's children. Now the Lord allowed this, in order to make him the witness and apostle of the sovereign grace which opened his eyes, converted and pardoned him. Here it is evidently sovereign grace meeting the fury of the ardent enemy of truth and grace, who sought, as he himself says, to destroy Christianity, and banish the name of Christ from the face of the earth. While occupied in this very purpose, the Lord stops him on his way, and reveals Himself to his soul, and also to his eyes, so that he might be an eye-witness of His glory. A light from heaven shone round about him— "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

But two very important truths are contained in this remarkable scene. The Lord's glory is revealed. Saul had not seen the Lord—had not followed Him when present in the flesh. The twelve apostles had known Him in the days of His flesh, and had seen Him disappear in the cloud; they knew by faith that He was seated at the right hand of God, but they could not be eye-witnesses of His glory. It is then that Paul begins. He saw the Lord's glory, but knew not who He was. One thing he was certain of—the glory and the voice of the Lord Himself had appeared to him. He asks therefore, "Who art thou, Lord? "Then the Lord replies, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." He was not a man of the earth, nor the Messiah gone up to heaven, but the Lord of glory

recognising Himself still as Jesus, and also Jesus of Nazareth.

The starting-point of the doctrine is different: the same redemption, the same Saviour; but the revelation given to the twelve is that the man Jesus is gone up to heaven; God has exalted Him. The revelation given to Saul is that the Lord of glory is Jesus of Nazareth. It begins with heavenly glory; then, in the second place, that all Christians are united with Himself, members of His body. This doctrine is not unfolded but it is not said, "Why persecutest thou My disciples?" as a doctor or a rabbi, but "Why persecutest thou me?" And this is the Lord of glory. "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

Such are the fundamental points in the history of Paul, the enemy of the Lord of glory, converted, pardoned, justified, necessary witness of sovereign grace. The gospel of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, of the glory of the Lord, is confided to him; then the truth of the union, of the unity of Christians with Christ, glorious Head in heaven. Peter preached that God had glorified Him whom the Jews had crucified, and invited the rebels to come to God by the sacrifice which he had perfected; and to those who repented Jesus would return. Saul preached that this salvation was for all men; and that God, as Saviour, could not limit Himself to the narrow bounds of Israel, but that He announced Himself to the whole creation under heaven; then, that the assembly of God was united to Jesus, His body.

We shall see that God did not permit disunion, but desired that there should be a single assembly. But it is not the less true that Paul was a witness that there was no difference, that all men were lost, all children of

wrath, one just as another; and that Jesus, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, had united all in one body—a truth which the Jews (and also the Christian Jews) always resisted, tormenting the apostle in his work. Peter himself dissimulated, so that all the Christian Jews, led by his authority, which was only the fear of man, sided with him. Not one of the apostles speaks in his epistles of the assembly, the body of Christ on earth, save only Paul. The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; sovereign grace, by which he was the example to all those who should afterwards believe in Christ Jesus; and the whole in virtue of the cross— such was the gospel confided to Paul.

His travelling companions were witnesses to the truth of the vision, but did not know of the revelation confided to Paul. The bright light shone around them, but they did not see the Lord. They heard a voice, but not the words of Him who spoke. Paul was a witness of that which he had seen and heard. Paul's companions were able to testify to the vision, which was a real thing, and not an invention of Paul for his own glory. The whole was confirmed by the mission of Ananias, to whom the Lord revealed what had happened, sending him to Saul to open his eyes, and receive him into the Christian assembly by baptism, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the sudden light had blinded Saul.

God had drawn him away from all communication with the outside world, in order that he might be entirely occupied with his soul, and with the state in which he found himself. In fact his situation was without a parallel. Externally he was a man without spot, of irreproachable reputation according to the law; he had a good conscience. He believed it his duty to do much

against the name of Jesus, and he did it. The authorities of the religion of the fathers encouraged and sent him, in every way supporting him in what he did with such zeal; conscience, legal justice, religion, all that formed his moral life, had made him the fierce enemy of the Lord of glory. But at one blow all the foundations of his moral life were ruined. It was by these very foundations that he became the enemy of the Lord, and resisted the Spirit who called men to repentance by the testimony rendered to His glory. Saul had assisted in an active way in this opposition, when the Jews stoned Stephen. But this did not satisfy him. His zeal required that he should persecute also those who believed in distant parts. Thus occupied he meets with the Lord, whose name he was seeking to extirpate. He was therefore the head, the chief, of sinners; in ignorance it is true, but nevertheless willingly. Where was his good conscience according to man? Where his legal justice? Where his religion, of which the priests and religious authorities had for him been supreme before? All had led him to discover himself an enemy of fiery zeal to the Lord, face to face with whom he found himself now, but still the object of His grace, at the very moment when he was occupied so thoroughly in destroying His glory. What a revulsion! What an overturning in his heart! Who can tell what passed in him during those three days?

And yet the Lord does not send Ananias to him till this internal moral work was completed. Old things have passed away, and now all things have become new in his soul, in the bottom of his thoughts; all is of God who has revealed Himself in the glory of the face of Jesus Christ. He is no longer a Jew, although he may be one externally: but he has not become a Gentile; joined to

the Lord of glory, Jesus Christ, he knows henceforth no man any more after the flesh. He knows the Lord, he knows His people as united with Him, Gentiles and Jews alike lost sinners, children of wrath; but he knows the sovereign grace towards himself which has called him, has revealed the Son of God to him, and has given him eternal life, even while engaged in destroying His name. All was grace, pure and sovereign grace, grace which went so far as to make of Christians one body with Christ in heaven, and to give them to know it. How marvellous the revelations we find unfolded in the epistles of the apostle! The gospel of the glory of Christ is easily understood when we realise how and when the apostle was converted.

But it is worth while considering some of the circumstances which accompanied the conversion of the apostle. The Lord made use of a converted Jew, hated by his countrymen, to convey to Paul the formal testimony of His grace, and receive him into the bosom of the assembly, in order that, as we before said, he might never more fear, the vision having passed away that might be mistaken. Here is a quiet man who had received a communication from the Lord, fully confirming what had happened to Saul. Moreover, Saul is made by another revelation to expect Ananias so that he may receive his sight by the laying on of his hands.

But I should like to call attention to still other circumstances —the full liberty, and, one may say, the familiarity with which Ananias speaks to the Lord (with reverence and submission, of course); and, in the same way, the Lord with him. When the Lord calls him, he replies immediately, “Here am I.” Nevertheless the Lord, the Man who interests Himself in His own as friends

whom He loves, speaks with an open heart to Ananias; shewing him not only the way, the house where Saul was to be found, but that which was necessary to identify him, namely, that Saul prayed and that he had seen Ananias coming to him to lay hands on him and restore his sight—just as one tells a servant what to say, or to a friend what is in the heart.

Thus the Lord took knowledge of what Paul was doing, and speaks of it to Ananias. And we see in the answer of Ananias a perfect trust in this goodness of the Lord. He begins to reason with the Lord. He had heard that this man was come to bind those who called upon the name of the Lord. And the Lord does not reprove him. Of course he had to go and do what the Lord desired; but He explains the matter to him, and communicates to him His thoughts concerning Saul, that he was a chosen vessel to bear His name, and that He would shew him what things he should suffer for His name's sake. In a word the Lord opens His heart to Ananias, as a to friend whom He treats with full confidence, speaks naturally, but confidingly tells all He feels to Ananias.

It is very important to remember that Jesus is always man. If He were not God, His humanity would have no value; but, being God, the fact that He interests Himself in us as a man, as men whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren, is infinitely precious. He can feel with us, take part in all our circumstances, trials, difficulties, and troubles. He loves us as the Father loved Him, a man and Son on the earth. His love has divine perfection, but He feels as a man, as a man on the earth, tempted in like manner as we are apart from sin. He is ever a man; He thinks of us as One who has passed through all these things with divine love and human sympathy. Not only

does He know everything as God, but He has had the experience of a man. Precious truth, unfathomable grace!

We have no need of saints—if they could hear us—to move His heart to favour us, to render His love warmer, His interest more profound, or His knowledge of our condition more intimate. But He has had the experience on purpose to be able to understand and sympathise with His own in every circumstance of the life of God in man on the earth. How great is the intensity of the Saviour's love! How near to us! How intelligent and intimate is His heart in the conflict of faith! He knows all, feels all, and is with us in everything to help us. Blessed be His love!

It is possible that He may not reveal Himself to us in visions, but His heart is not colder to us than to Ananias; His wisdom is not diminished; His willingness is not weakened to help us, neither is His arm shortened. The intimacy and the confidence of our hearts ought to be the same to tell Him everything; certain it is that His ear is open to listen to us.

Thus sent and encouraged, Ananias obeys, goes in perfect confidence towards him who not long before breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the Christians; and lays his hands on him, saying, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou earnest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." Saul immediately receives his sight, and rises, is baptized, eats, and walks with the disciples at Damascus. Without delay he preaches Christ in the synagogues, declaring Him to be the Son of God.

Although the lion had become a lamb, yet he had not lost his energy; but his object is different; now he preaches what he had formerly sought to destroy. The subject of his preaching differs a little from that of Peter, and responds to the revelation of Christ, which was made to him. Peter preached that God had exalted the Jesus whom they had rejected; Saul, that Christ was the Son of God.

But the pungency of Saul's preaching stirs up the animosity of the Jews. It is always the religious who oppose the truth, because their own importance and traditions are compromised. The rancour of the flesh, particularly in religious things, knows of no giving way. They seek to stone Saul, making conscience and religion their plea. But God watches over His servant; their plot is made known to Paul; and, while they wait day and night for him at the gates, the disciples take him by night, and let him down over the wall in a basket. Thus he escapes out of men's hands.

The following verse (26), does not, I think, apply to an immediately succeeding period. When, however, he arrives at Jerusalem, they are still afraid of him, not yet knowing all that has happened to him; but the good Barnabas introduces him to the apostles, and makes known to them the whole truth of his conversion. Here again the apostle bears faithful witness, and again religious men seek to put him to death. But the time had not yet arrived for his own special mission. The brethren bring him down to Caesarea, and he sets out for Tarsus, his native city.

The narrative now returns to the work of Peter. Although Saul was called to preach the gospel to the nations, and

was set apart to this mission by a special dispensation of God founded on a more perfect revelation, which left the Jews behind as sinners by nature as well as the Gentiles, and taught that there was no difference, since all had sinned, bringing in the new creation, and knowing Christ no more after the flesh; yet there were not to be two assemblies; the oneness of the church was to be maintained.

Peter is employed, after the conversion of Saul, to bring the first Gentile to the knowledge of Christ. But he never taught what the church was as the body of Christ: this is not revealed in the case of Cornelius. That the Gentiles should take their place among the Christians. without becoming Jews, or being circumcised, was something that Peter and the other Jews had great difficulty in believing.

As to the progress of the gospel, let us see what is taught us in the sequel. We shall find that those who had been scattered, being Hellenists, or Jews who had lived in foreign countries, and were accustomed to maintain daily intercourse with the Gentiles, spoke with these: so that the free action of the Spirit also communicated by this means the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul had a new formal mission to every creature under heaven, and then he taught what the assembly was—a truth set forth by no other. See Colossians 1. And he himself was to be a member of the assembly, already founded and established on Christ, which was His body, the habitation of God through the Spirit, though he alone taught this doctrine.

It is not without importance to remark that the Romish system is founded on the authority of Peter, and draws

all its pretensions from him; but the doctrine of the church was never confided to Peter. Peter was not the apostle of the uncircumcision, but of the circumcision (Gal. 2); full of power for the work among the Jews, he left that among the Gentiles entirely in the hands of Paul. Peter does not speak of the body of Christ, we who are Gentiles; and the instrument whom God adopted to establish the church among the Gentiles was Paul; 1 Cor. 3.

The foundation is one, that is, Christ; the gospel of salvation, one (1 Cor. 15:2). Moreover, God Himself founded the assembly on the day of Pentecost by the gift of the Holy Ghost; but, as a human builder, Paul it was whom God employed to establish the church among the Gentiles, and unfold what it was. The other apostles never speak of the body of Christ, nor of the presence of the Holy Ghost on the earth. Peter then goes about continually, and the power of God manifests itself in him. Apneas is healed; Tabitha is restored to life. The effect, however, of the first miracle is greater than that of the second. All that dwell at Lydda and Saron, rich countries on the sea-shore, turn to the Lord. At Joppa many believe on Him; and there Peter tarries many days.

Chapter 10.

While Peter remains in Simon’s house, God is occupied with the Gentiles, of whom Peter was not thinking and, even when he did think of them, not at all disposed to admit them among the believing Jews. The angel of God appears to Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, faithful according to the knowledge he possessed, fearing God, and praying continually. He was then converted, but did not know

that salvation which had been announced by grace in Jesus, obtained for us on the cross. There are many people who, though they may have learned more than Cornelius, and who bear the name of Christians, have not got beyond this state. These are like the prodigal son (Luke 15), when he repents and arises to go to his father. He was on the right way, but he did not know how he would be received by his father. Such people possess perhaps more light, but as to their relation with God, they are in the same state.

But the conversion of Cornelius, and his introduction to the Christian assembly, was evidently of great importance. The Gentiles were to participate in the grace and blessing of the gospel. The promises had been given to the Jews—none of them to the Gentiles; but the revelation of the grace of God could not be limited to one people. In His government of the world God could choose a people for Himself, when mankind had abandoned Him and had altogether fallen into idolatry, in order to maintain on the earth the knowledge of the one true God, and to put the heart of man to the test, shew what it was, and unfold His ways in the midst of mankind. But God, revealed in grace according to His nature, could not in any way be the God of a single nation.

Hidden behind the veil, He could give a perfect law, promises, and prophecies; but at the death of Christ the veil is rent in twain, God is fully revealed in grace and justice, and could no longer be the God of the Jews only. Moreover, at the death of Christ, the Jews as a nation were set aside till they should repent. Yes, it was God’s will that the Gentiles should take part in the new

blessings of grace. All were sinners; but God purified by faith one as freely as another.

Independently of the Jews, He sends His angel to Cornelius. His prayers and alms are recognised as being acceptable to God. He is told to send men to Joppa to call for Simon, who, the angel tells him, lodged with one Simon, a tanner. He would tell him what he ought to do. Here is a new and important fact. God was thinking about the Gentiles, and desired to admit them to the assembly without their becoming Jews or submitting to the law. Cornelius, a truly devout man, humble, and fearing God, acts immediately according to the word of the angel, and calls two of his servants and a devout soldier, and, having declared to them all that had happened, sends them to call for Peter.

As they travel, God prepares Peter's heart for a mission, to accomplish which he, till then, had been by no means ready. But God desired to have the Gentiles. Peter was praying on the roof of the house where he lodged, and becoming very hungry, he would have eaten; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw as it were a great sheet let down from heaven to earth, full of all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air, which it was not lawful for the Jews to eat. And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Rise, Peter, kill, and eat. Peter, faithful to Judaism, refuses to do so; he had never eaten anything common or unclean. Then the voice said to him, What God hath cleansed, that call thou not unclean.

As Peter seeks for the interpretation of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius come to the door and ask for him;

and the Spirit tells Peter to go with them, doubting nothing; for, said the Spirit, I have sent them. Peter, therefore, brings them in and lodges them, and on the morrow goes away with them, only taking the precaution of getting certain brethren to accompany him. Arrived at Cassarea, Cornelius throws himself at his feet as the messenger of God. Peter lifts him up, and asks for what reason he had sent for him.

Many relations and intimate friends of Cornelius were gathered together. All doubt as to the meaning of the vision was now removed. By the authority of God Himself, Peter found himself in the society of the Gentiles, which was unlawful for the Jews. He acknowledges God's willingness to receive those that feared Him and worked righteousness among all nations, not only among the Jews. While Cornelius and his friends listen with godly faith, he recounts the mission of Jesus, how the Jews had crucified Him, and God had raised Him up, of which thing the apostles were the witnesses, having eaten and drunk with Him after His resurrection; the proof that He was still a true man, though He possessed then a spiritual body, and that He was the same Jesus whom they had known alive on the earth. At the end of the Gospel of Luke, the basis of every record of the Acts, it is remarkable, how Jesus in perfect grace, takes pains to make the disciples certain that He was the same Jesus whom they had known. There we are told, that He ate and drank in order to demonstrate it (Luke 24:36, etc.). "And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave

him a piece of broiled fish, and of an honeycomb; and he took it, and did eat before them," Luke 24:40-43.

Still the principal thing remained. Cornelius was already converted, devout, faithful, and full of the fear of God, according to the light he possessed. But he did not know salvation, the work of the Saviour, and its efficacy. Led only by the grace of God, he received with faith what Peter told him. Now it was declared to him that, according to the testimony of all the prophets, he who believed in Jesus received the remission of his sins. The Holy Ghost seals by His coming this truth received with simple faith into the hearts of Cornelius and his friends. The Holy Ghost is given then to the Gentiles, without their becoming Jews or being circumcised. Henceforth it was impossible not to receive them into the Christian assembly. God had received them, and had put His seal on them. Peter commands them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

We have here four distinct points: the conversion of the soul by grace (Cornelius was already converted, and his prayers and alms accepted by God); then the testimony of the remission of his sins by faith in Jesus, the victim by whom propitiation was made for us on the cross; then the seal of God in the gift of the Holy Ghost; and, finally, the formal reception among the Christians. This order is not that which is found elsewhere; because God was here shewing that it was His will that the Gentiles should be received. But it is important to distinguish the four things, and to observe the true force of each of them.

Chapter 2.

The difficulty to the Jews of receiving the Gentiles was a great one. To do so was to give up all their privileges, all that remained of the ancient glory of Israel. Peter therefore, on his return to Jerusalem, is reproved; he had eaten with the Gentiles. Peter narrates all that had happened, and how God had given them the gift just as to believing Jews; how then could he hinder God? The Spirit had sent him to the Gentiles; the Spirit had been given to them. It was the accomplishment of the words of John the Baptist; and other brethren were witnesses to the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Jews could no longer resist the clear evidence of the will of God. Grace overcoming in their hearts, they exclaim, “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”

It is important to ponder deeply the difference between conversion and salvation. I have already spoken on this subject, but it is one that is so much neglected, and Christians are so accustomed to be content with a low state of soul, and are so uncertain with regard to salvation, that I shall take the opportunity of adding a few more words. Cornelius was already converted; his prayers and alms were acceptable to God. He was to call for Peter, who would tell him words whereby he might be saved. God had been working in his soul, but he did not yet know the value of the work accomplished by the Saviour. It is the same in the case of the woman in Luke 7; she loved the Lord deeply, had felt the height of His grace and the depth of her sins; but knew not that all was pardoned. The Lord tells her so. The prodigal son was converted, confessed his sins, and turned towards his father, but he was not yet clothed with the best garment. His father had not yet fallen on his neck, he

knew not his love; he hardly hoped to be admitted as a servant, and was not in a fit state to enter into the house. Every privilege awaited him, but he did not possess them.

I doubt not that He who has begun the good work will continue it till the day of Christ Jesus. As long as a soul reasons about its state, seeks to know whether it is saved or converted, and judges by its own heart of what is in the heart of God, it is under law; salvation for such an one depends on his own state, not on the love of God and the efficacy of the work of Christ. He may perhaps say he is truly converted; he feels the need of salvation, and believes that others have found it; but he does not himself possess it; just as Israel was not out of the land of Egypt till the sea was crossed. Two things, which cannot be separated, are necessary; faith in the work of Christ, and the knowledge that it is finished. I say they cannot be separated, because, when we believe in the work of Christ, and by faith trust in it, we are sealed by the Holy Ghost; we enjoy peace (the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts), we are reconciled to God, and in Christ are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in fight; and we know it by the Holy Ghost given to us. In spirit we are in the Father's house, partaking of the food with which He nourishes His beloved children. Not only has the heart turned towards God, but Christ is our righteousness, who also appears for us continually before the face of God.

Before the narrative of the mission of the apostle Paul, we find once more the free activity of the Holy Ghost in all the members of the body of Christ. Those who had been dispersed by the persecution raised against the Christians on the death of Stephen were preaching

everywhere, but for the most part to the Jew only. It never occurred to them that the grace and the thoughts of God could overstep the limits of His people after the flesh. A few of them, however, who, living in Gentile districts (especially at Antioch), daily came in contact with the Gentiles and desired their salvation also, preached the Lord Jesus to them. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number, having believed, were converted to the Lord.

Thus we find that no sooner is the unity of the assembly secured by the admission of Cornelius to it by means of Peter—he first making use of the keys of the kingdom to admit, according to the Lord's promise, the Gentiles also — than the free action of the Spirit is reproduced. The gospel is spread among the nations, not by means of Peter, nor of Paul, who afterwards became the great minister of God towards the Gentiles, but by means of the faithful, stirred up by the love of Christ reigning in their hearts, and giving them the desire that His name should be glorified. It was not a question of ordination, nor of human consecration. All, except the apostles, had been scattered, and all were preaching. That there are especial gifts is evident in the word, but it was love to Christ and souls that opened their mouths.

And observe, the fact is not merely recorded in the word, but their activity is approved by the Lord. "The hand of the Lord was with them." The gospel was first preached to the Gentiles by private Christians, moved by the grace of God to communicate to others the blessing which they themselves enjoyed; and they sought to establish the authority of Christ over mankind, and glorify His name—an important principle clearly demonstrated in this narrative.

Let us bear in mind that the first dissemination of the gospel among the nations was effected, not by means of official preachers, but by ordinary Christians, not sent out by men; but moved by love to Christ. Subsequently Paul was sent expressly by the Holy Ghost, and received apostolic gifts; but he was not sent by the other apostles but directly by God and by Jesus Christ, by means of the Holy Ghost. Moreover, in the providence of God, the free activity of Christians became the occasion of his mission. “Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch: who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people was added unto the Lord.” Then Barnabas goes to seek for Paul, whom the brethren had brought to Caesarea, from whence he had gone to his native city, Tarsus. We have seen that Barnabas was a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, but he was not a man capable of taking the initiative, of starting and maintaining such a work as that of the conversion of the Gentiles. Thus, though blessed by God, he is not His instrument for this work. He was himself conscious of this, and so, with kindness and simplicity of heart, and doubtless led of God, seeks the instrument chosen and called by God. He had already introduced him to the Jews at Jerusalem, who were afraid of their late persecutor.

The power of Saul’s call had separated him from everything to be for Christ alone. He awaited only the formal message from the Lord, a new source of courage

and the effect of the spirit of humility and obedience. In our times, it is a difficulty that there is no clear and open call like that of Saul, but we have seen that all were free to evangelise; and moreover that they were bound to accomplish the work according to the strength of the love of Christ working in their hearts. And if there is a special gift, this gift is unfolded in the exercise of it. Besides, we have the promise and the precept, “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.” Such were the first disseminators of the gospel among the Gentiles. Apostolical gifts are indeed wanting, and that is a great loss; but it is an honour to be thus dependent on God, and that activity should be the fruit of the spiritual state. We shall experience our own weakness, but also the unwavering faithfulness of God. We have also the warning of the same James, “Be not many masters.” The word of God is enough for all times; if it is not enough for us, it will be for our condemnation. The grace of God must work in us. Let us bear it in mind.

We see, however, the greatest liberty in the exercise of the ministry. Barnabas seeks Saul; Paul takes Silas, Timothy, and others; he wished Apollos to go to Corinth, but Apollos did not wish to go there. Saul then, and Barnabas, exercise their ministry together; they assemble themselves with the church, and teach much people. It was thus that a Christian assembly was founded at Antioch, the capital of the Gentile world in that quarter, and the point from which the Grecian world was evangelised.

But it was important that this assembly should not be separated from that of Jerusalem, and so we are

suddenly taken back to that city. It is still lovingly recognised; and we shall see that God makes use of the very strength that sought to bring the Gentiles under subjection to the law, to set them free, maintain unity, and preserve liberty. Now the union is strengthened by the fruits of love. A prophet (and there were such in the new assembly) announces that there should be a great dearth throughout all the world; and the disciples determine to send aid to the brethren in Judaea; which is done by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Chapter 12.

The Spirit now takes us back to Jerusalem. He was willing to forget neither it nor the testimony of God found there. The Spirit here records an event which sets forth the care that God, in His providence, had of His own (and especially, by means of the angels, for Peter), working in them by His Spirit. He permits that James, the brother of John, should succumb to the malice of Herod, the enemy of the gospel. That this was pleasing to the Jews gave the king a further pretext for continuing in the path of his opposition. Little mattered the death of a few Christians, if their death gave him popularity with the Jews. He therefore seized Peter and put him in prison, purposing after the feast of the passover to give him up to the people.

But the thoughts of God were otherwise. The night before he was to be led out to the people, Peter slept in perfect peace under the protection of God, although, so that the hand of God might be shewn in his liberation, he was strongly guarded by men. He slept between two soldiers, bound with two chains. Sentinels before the door guarded the prison likewise. But we are more

secure in the hands of God than when exposed to the violence of men, even though they may seem to have us firmly enough in their grasp.

The angel awakens Peter, and at the sound of his voice the chains fall from his hands. Every detail is minutely recorded. At the word of the angel Peter binds on his sandals and girds himself. The care of the angel is most minute. And when, after having passed the two guards, they reached the outer gate, it opens to them of itself. The angel accompanies Peter through one street, and then disappears. Peter, who till this moment imagined he saw a vision, now becomes conscious that God has delivered him from the hands of Herod and from the expectation of the Jews. Observe here how visions resembled the reality, since Peter believed the reality to be a vision. Thus, considering the things, he comes to die house of Mary, the mother of Mark, a place probably often the scene of the meetings of the Christians. It was the home of the sister of Barnabas. Mark had gone with Barnabas on his separation from Paul: but Mark is again found in Colossians; and in 2 Timothy 4:11 his service is recognised as profitable for the ministry. Sweet it is to see how grace, shut out for a while by failure, hastens to recognise the brother brought back to the path of devotedness, and to renewed usefulness in the work of the Lord.

Peter does not remain there, but, telling them to make known to James what has occurred, departs and goes to another place. But here we shall do well to remark a few particulars. The refuge of the faithful is in prayer. They had come together to ask God for the preservation of Peter, and God had heard their prayer. They did not know how, but they had put trust in God. It seemed to be

the natural resource of the hearts of these believers; and the feeling was a common one. In the difficulty which had occurred, the danger of the beloved apostle, they meet together to look to God. Prayer was given to their hearts by the Holy Ghost as a refuge in adversity; and though they might not know how God would respond, yet they were always answered according to His own counsels. Peter is set free according to their desire; but we see how little the heart, though by grace it may have confidence in God and turns to Him in its need, believes that its supplications will be granted. Here their need had been expressed to God, but when the answer came, they could not believe it was possible.

Peter is set free by the intervention of the angel, and Herod is struck by the judgment of God when he sets himself up against Him. Can we expect similar intervention now? I do not believe that miracles are performed to-day; angels no longer appear; it was not a gift that could continue. In Ephesians 4 no miraculous gifts are to be found. But I fully believe, according to the Lord's promise, that prayer is heard, and that the angels work in favour of the children of God as much now as in those early times. As to prayer, the word of God is clear. The condition is made, however, that what we ask be according to the will of God, and that prayer be made in faith; and we are told that, if the words of Christ abide in us, we shall ask what we will.

The Lord and the apostles exhort us to prayer without ceasing, in confidence, never letting our faith fail. We do well if we make known our requests to God in every case; but it does not follow that we shall always receive what we ask—as, for example, it happened to Paul with regard to the thorn in his flesh. For him it would not

have been good for God to have answered him. But the result of our prayers is that the peace of God which passes knowledge shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil. 4). His throne is not disturbed, neither is His heart burdened by our solicitations; and the peace in which He dwells continually shall, when we have placed these requests on His throne, work effectually in our hearts. The outward manifestation of the power of God, the testimony rendered at the beginning to the word of God, does not repeat itself; but God's care, His answers to prayer, and the blessed service of angels, still remain to the children of God. (For the angels, see Heb. 1:14.)

Here we find then God's care for the assembly at Jerusalem; but we shall not again see any activity on the part of Peter. That such was to be the case is demonstrated by the fact of this intervention. We know that he went to Antioch, probably for the work of the Lord, but this is not stated. There he was unfaithful to the Lord, and is reproved by Paul. He wrote to the Jews in the provinces of Asia Minor, but it is not known whether he went there. It is possible that he lived in Babylon, but it is uncertain; many Jews lived there. In his epistle he salutes on the part of the saints there; but we possess no account of any of his doings. He was the first to introduce the Gentiles to the public Christian assembly, in order to preserve unity.

At this period ordinary Christians, in their dispersion, disseminated the truth among the Gentiles. Unity was still preserved; and the wisdom of God declared, by means of the assembly at Jerusalem, that the Gentiles were not under the subjection of the law. But as for Peter no more is heard regarding his activity; for the

divine work was now to leave Jerusalem. He is fully recognised here by the care of the angels, but the power of the Holy Ghost is only found in Paul and in his companions. Antioch is the starting-point, and not Jerusalem; as for Rome, it is the last place where the church is established, and it was not founded there by the apostles. Before the arrival of Paul Christians, who, like many others, had gone to the capital of the world, met together there; and Paul wrote to them before going. What became of Peter is not recorded, and, save in chapter 15, where what he had previously done is mentioned, he now entirely disappears from the narrative. Paul, sent from Antioch by the Holy Ghost, is the instrument of God for the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles, and to teach what the church was, the mystery which had been hid from ages and generations. See Colossians 1:23-27. It is his history which follows in chapter 13.

Chapter 13.

Barnabas and Saul, having accomplished their mission, return to Antioch, from whence they had gone to Jerusalem with the contribution for the poor. Now in the assembly at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers. These ministered to the Lord and fasted. While thus engaged, with hearts consecrated to the Lord; the Holy Ghost said— “Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.” Doubtless the command was given by the mouth of one of these prophets, for this reason called such; but the important fact to remark is that these two apostles were called by the Spirit Himself.

Then, under the impression of the seriousness of the call, having again fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on them and sent them away. And it was on a mission of the greatest importance. The gospel, and the revelation of the assembly, is now formally given to the Gentiles, they and the Jews, as believers, being united in one body on the earth and for the heavens. Let us consider a few particulars.

Already Paul had been called by the revelation and the authority of Christ, and more precisely by the revelation of a glorified Christ. Saul had not known Christ on the earth. Of this we have spoken. He had been separated both from the Jews and from the Gentiles. As regards religion, he did not belong to the one class any more than to the other, but was united to a risen and glorified Christ. Henceforth he knew no man after the flesh, not even Christ—that is, as a Jew who awaited a Christ on the earth, according to the promises given to the nation. As a witness called by God his starting-point was the glory—Christ in heavenly glory, the same who had suffered by the hands of those who were still persecuting His members on the earth. For him the cross was the end of his Adamic and Judaic life. He was dead to the world, to the flesh, to the law. He laboured as an apostle of, and one who belonged to, a new creation.

Moreover, he drew neither his authority nor his mission from the apostles who preceded him; his mission did not even originate at Jerusalem, and was not dependent on the sanction of the apostles there, nor of the church at that place. His mission was given directly from God and from Christ. Personally called by Christ three years before, he is now sent by the Holy Ghost, and departs

from Antioch, a Gentile city, from the bosom of an assembly where the Gentiles had first gathered together. He did not go to or from another assembly. The superstition and legality of the Jews very nearly did so, but God did not permit it, as we shall see. His mission was nevertheless entirely independent; it was dependent on the authority of Christ alone, and on the power of the Holy Ghost. The apostle insists much on this point in the first two chapters of the epistle to the Galatians.

He desired to be absolutely independent of Peter and the others; and not only did he assert his having been sent from God Himself, but he was obliged to rebuke Peter, who, for fear of those who came from Jerusalem, had been unfaithful to the truth and to his own convictions. Paul was free from all men, subject to Christ, and in love the servant of all; a model and example for all Christians, as indeed he himself tells us. He fully recognised the mission of Peter to the Jews, as well as that of the other apostles; but though he preached the same gospel as they, his mission was directly from God Himself.

Barnabas and Saul are not only called, but sent by the Holy Ghost. They depart therefore to Seleucia, and from thence sail to Cyprus. But here the state of the work is manifested—a new aspect of affairs. The Gentiles are disposed to listen. Judgment falls on the Jews for a time, on account of their opposition to the gospel, especially on its proclamation to the Gentiles. See 1 Thessalonians 2:16. Till now all the light that was in the world the Jews possessed; but, having rejected the true and perfect Light of the world, they had fallen into darkness, and hated the light, and all the more because jealousy filled their hearts. The apostle never denied their privileges.

In Salamis he began by preaching in their synagogues. He did not give up the Jews till the Jews rejected the gospel.

Now John Mark, the son of her in whose house the disciples had met together to pray for Peter, was with them. The relationships of the apostle were still Judaic, for, though himself free, Paul profoundly loved his nation as the people of God. Having gone through the island, they find with the governor a certain Jew, a false prophet. The governor, a prudent man, desires to hear the word of God. The sorcerer Elymas, however, withstands the apostles, seeking to turn the deputy away from the faith. But if the hurtful power of the enemy was with the sorcerer, the power of God was with the apostles. They strike the false prophet with blindness. Such is a remarkable picture of the state of the Jews, and of the power of God shewn in the propagation of the gospel. The deputy, astonished at the doctrine of the Lord, believes.

Saul now assumes the name of Paul, having (we are not told how) changed his Jewish name for a Roman one. The moment was a convenient one. The word literally signifies “to work”; but I do not think this is either the source or the intention of it.

After crossing the sea, John Mark leaves them. His relationship with Jerusalem was too strong for him, and the difficulties and dangers of the work of the apostles too great for his faith. Barnabas was his uncle; Cyprus, the country of Barnabas. Alas! how many there are whose faith depends on circumstances! They go on steadily while surrounded by these circumstances; but

when the path leads to simple dependence on the faithfulness of God, their steps at once begin to flag.

The power of the Spirit of God creates His instruments, and adapts each for His work; and, set forth by the energy of the Spirit, they are sustained by His power in the midst of all circumstances, whatever they may be. We shall see that even Barnabas could not continue always with Paul, nor consent to know no longer any man after the flesh. But it is sweet to see how, as I have already said, Paul in the end recognises Mark as profitable for the ministry (2 Tim. 4:11). So Mark goes away, and Barnabas and Paul continue their journeying in strange lands, where the gospel is unknown.

Leaving Perga, they come to another Antioch, in Pisidia, where they enter into the synagogue of the Jews. Called on by the rulers of the synagogue to exhort the congregation (for the ministry was freer among the Jews than in modern Christian churches), they announce Jesus and the resurrection. Let us notice certain points in this address. As was generally the case, it was composed of facts. The apostle briefly relates the history of Israel till the time of David; and then lays down the two fundamental parts of the gospel—namely, the fulfilment of the promises, and the powerful intervention of God in the resurrection of Christ, by which He was shewn to be the Son of God. In this way also he begins the Epistle to the Romans. All the narratives of the Acts depend on the mission given at the end of Luke. The subjects are repentance and remission of sins. For Israel the way had been prepared by John the Baptist. Then God, according to His promise, raised up (not raised from among the dead) a Saviour.

But they of Jerusalem had accomplished all that the prophets had spoken, knowing neither the Saviour nor the voice of the prophets, which, in crucifying Jesus, they had fulfilled. But God had raised Him from the dead, and He had been seen for many days by those who had accompanied Him from Galilee. Thus was the promise in Psalm 2 of the coming of the Son of God, the King of Israel, accomplished. But, we would add, as to the responsibility of Israel, it is lost on account of the rejection of Christ; yet on the part of God all the promises were firmly established in His resurrection according to Isaiah 55:3, and as to His person, the prophecy of Psalm 16 is accomplished. All that the Jews were now to receive was to be given in pure grace. On this foundation the doctrine of the gospel is established. The remission of sins is announced, and justification from all things, from which the law of Moses could not justify. The basis of the new covenant has been laid, and the blood of that covenant shed, though the covenant itself be not yet established. It will be with Judah and with Israel in the last days, but founded on what has been already accomplished.

The apostles then exhort their hearers not to neglect the salvation which had been announced to them. The fundamental truths of the gospel ever remain the same; the remission of all sins to believers; the person of Christ proved to be the Son of God by His resurrection; and the fulfilment of the promises made to Israel, though that people be for a time set aside. But this justification being for believers, it was for the Gentiles also.

The Gentiles then ask that these words may be preached to them on the next sabbath. The fame of this new

doctrine quickly spreads, and nearly the whole city comes together to hear it. But the poor Jews, moved with jealousy, cannot bear to be surpassed in religious influence, and that another religion than theirs should work on the Gentiles. Oh, poor human heart, always stronger in religious people! The truth it has already believed in (and believed in because received by many, themselves unconverted; and because, besides being the truth, it does them honour to profess it) does not put the heart to the test. But truth is always truth, even though it be not received by the many; it does put the heart to the test, and must be received only because God gives it.

The Jews now begin to contradict and to blaspheme. Paul at once takes his stand, and acknowledging that the gospel ought first to be preached to the Jews, as heirs of the promises, openly declares that he turns to the Gentiles, taking the remarkable prophecy in Isaiah 49 as the commandment of the Lord. There the Spirit presents Israel as the nation in which God should be glorified. But then the Messiah had laboured in vain, for Israel was not gathered in. Still it was but a small thing to bring back the tribes of Israel; the Messiah should be a light to the Gentiles, and the salvation of God to the ends of the earth. On the ground of this declaration of the will of God, the apostles turn to the Gentiles.

Such was free grace, poured out on all, leaving the strict confines of Judaism, and directing itself to the whole world. But still the grace of God, mingled with faith, was necessary to make the truth enter the heart, so that it might be born of God. This is what happens here. The power of God accompanied the word and “as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” The result is this:—opposition on the part of the Jews, testimony

throughout all the earth (except at Jerusalem, chap. 15), and the operation of grace in the heart, whereby it is led to the acceptance of the gospel.

Already, on the first sabbath day, many Gentiles and proselytes had followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. The Jews, however, on account of their failure, are put aside. The spiritual energy of Paul now places him at the head of the work. Till this moment it has been Barnabas and Paul; henceforth we shall find Paul and Barnabas.

The gospel is shed abroad in all these regions; but the opposition of the Jews increases. They “stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.” Similar scenes are enacted everywhere. By the permission of God (He, however, still holding the reins in His own hand) the devotees of the old religion, and the devout women, with the chief men under their influence, seek to cast out the gospel. The apostles shake off the dust from their feet, in testimony of the justice awaiting those who rejected the grace and salvation of God. “And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.”

Such is the varied picture of the work of the gospel in the world, and the first public exhibition of its result, when announced in the face of the opposition of the old religion, which still exercised its power over unconverted hearts, in presence of the need and unbelief of mankind. And such, in spite of conflicts and difficulties, is the power of the gospel under the influence of the Holy Ghost. It is first preached to the

Jews, because they had the promises; then it is given to the Gentiles, because all believers are justified by faith in Christ. A dead and risen Christ is for all. Opposition springs up from the hatred of the Jews, of the devout women according to the old religion, and of the principal men of the city. Judgment, though not executed, is pronounced; and then grace, working in the hearts of the believers, leads them to faith and joy in the presence of the Spirit, those who do not believe being left under judgment. Expelled from Antioch, the apostles prosecute their labours elsewhere.

Chapter 14.

At Iconium many believed, but the Jews renewed their efforts against the gospel. As God worked by the word, however, the apostles abode there a long time. But, the city being divided, and their adversaries desirous of doing them injury, they set out for Lystra and Derbe, where they preach the gospel, as also in the regions round about. At Lystra the power of God was manifested by the hand of Paul in healing a cripple who had never walked. Here we find that the faith of the cripple had to go with his restoration; in other cases this does not appear, the cure being effected by the power of God alone, by him who was His instrument.

The people, astonished by the miracle, call Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercury, because he was the chief speaker. Barnabas (as Mercury was servant to Jupiter) is mentioned first in the narrative. The priest of Jupiter desires to do sacrifice with the people. The apostles, Barnabas and Paul, vexed in heart at seeing the purpose of the people, and far from desiring any honour for themselves, rend their clothes, and running in among

the crowd to stop them, announce the one true God (not here salvation), who, till then, “had suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”

Such was the beautiful description of what God was, even among the Gentiles, and of what He gave to be known by them; I do not say that they did know Him, for they preferred the imaginations of their own hearts, and the gods who favoured their evil lusts. Nothing could be more horrible than what man shewed himself to be, when God left him, on account of his perversity, to himself. What they did every day in their idolatry is unfit to be written. The account of it may be found in Romans 1. The apostles seek to persuade the Gentiles of Lystra to give up their idols, and to believe in the one, true, and bountiful God, whom they had come expressly to declare to them, to lead them to His knowledge and to faith in Him. Scarcely, however, do they succeed in preventing the people from sacrificing to them.

But the Jews (not satisfied with having driven the apostles from Antioch and Iconium, and moved by an animosity, grievous to the heart, against the gospel) come to Lystra also, and persuade the people, who, ignorant and fickle, now seek to stone those whom, shortly before, they had been ready to adore. Paul, the more culpable in their eyes because the more active in the work, is stoned, and, apparently dead, is dragged out df the city. Such is man—such the religious, when they have not the truth; Paul himself had been such—but such also is the power of the gospel, when active in an unbelieving world.

But it was not in the thoughts of God that His servant should then perish. “As the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city; and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.” Much blessed in this city, he goes on his way and returns to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, from whence he had been expelled. Outrage and violence neither impede the work nor enfeeble the courage of the servants. When the Lord so wills it, they return in peace to the very places from whence they have been driven. It is beautiful to see the calm superiority of faith over the violence of man, and how God conducts the heart of His servants. They submit to, or, if possible, avoid violence; but if the work requires it, God opens the door, and the labourers are there with it again.

Now another part of their work is here presented. They continue to preach the gospel; but it was now necessary to establish assemblies, and put them in regular order (v. 23). They give the disciples to understand that Christ was not come to bring peace on the earth which would meet with the opposition and enmity of the world, but that through much tribulation they must enter the kingdom of God. It was a warning for all times to make men understand that persecution was not a strange thing. “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” —not, however, all Christians. If a Christian conforms to the world, he will avoid persecution; but he will lose the joy of the Holy Ghost and communion with God; he will be saved as by fire, and an entrance into the eternal kingdom shall not be abundantly ministered to him. If we walk with God, we shall not be barren in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

I speak thus, because for many the time of open persecution has passed away; but, if we are faithful, we shall most surely experience persecution both from the world and from our own families. The world cannot tolerate faithfulness. If the Christian walk with the world, instead of winning the world to Christ, he himself gets at a distance from Him, and will lose, I do not say life, but his spiritual privileges, his joy, and the approval of Christ; and his testimony is against Christianity. By his ways he declares that the friendship of the world is not enmity against God. The Christian when with the world is in no respects at ease; and when in the company of spiritual Christians his conscience reproves him because he is walking badly, and that which is a joy to them, he cannot enter into. May all who are disposed to or in danger of being let to mingle with the ways of the world give heed to this exhortation!

The apostles chose elders for the assemblies in every city. It is neither chose by common vote, nor ordained; this is not the true rendering of the word, but “chose.” The same word is employed in 2 Corinthians 8:19, where the assemblies chose brethren to accompany Paul with the money collected for the poor of Jerusalem. The same word occurs again in Acts 10:41, where it is used in respect of God, and “chosen” is necessarily the sense. The apostles then chose elders for the assemblies. The epistle to Titus is another proof that the authority of the apostles was the source of that of the elders. I do. not dwell here, however, on this question, though it is an important one, since the ordinary translation leads to putting the truth in a false light.

We have not in these days apostolical authority; and election made by the assembly is a thing unknown to the

word. The authority descended from Christ to the apostle, and from the apostle to the elder. The word Bishop, in its present acceptation, is also unknown in the word. All the elders are really called bishops, as in Acts 20:17, 28; no other bishops are found in scripture; and at the beginning Paul and Barnabas chose them for every assembly among the Gentiles, as afterwards Paul sent Titus to establish them in every town in the island of Crete.

It is important here to observe that the apostle not only preached the gospel for the salvation of souls, which was his principal work, but that he united the converts in assemblies, to which he was afterwards able to write; and that the church or assembly which he founded in every city was properly ordered and represented the universal assembly, of which those who in each place composed it were members (1 Cor. 12), with the promise that Jesus would be in the midst of them. But the wickedness of Christians, or of Christians so-called, and forgetfulness of Christ's return (Matt. 24:48-50), have corrupted Christianity according to the prophecies of the New Testament. See 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Jude 4; 1 John 2:18, 19; Matt. 13:28-30. All is disorder, confusion, and corruption.

But we are here learning the primitive order, before the assembly became corrupted. John tells us that the last time has already come; and Paul that "the mystery of iniquity doth already work" (2 Thess. 2:7); Peter, that the hour has arrived to judge the house of God; Jude, that those who should be judged at the end had already crept in unawares.

The testimony is as clear as day, if we have ears to hear what is written in the word; that in the time of the apostles the corruption of the assembly of God had already commenced, and that, when the apostolic energy of Paul should be absent, evil from within and from without would inundate the church like a deluge. Matthew 13:29, 30, teaches us that the evil effected by the enemy in the kingdom of God should not be taken away till the judgment. It all exists still, while the patience of God gathers in His own.

Then, when they had prayed with fasting and had commended them that believed to the Lord, the apostles go down by Pisidia to the sea-shore, preach in Perga, and pass on to Antioch. Here we see the true force of what had been done in chapter 13:3. They had been recommended to the grace of God, for the work they had now fulfilled. This is repeated in chapter 15:40; so that Paul would have been twice ordained, if this had been ordination; and he would moreover have been an apostle ordained by the laity. This, however, he stoutly denies (Gal. 1:1); “an apostle,” he says, “not of men, neither by man.” The Judaizers sought to have it so, but he refuted it with all his power. These insisted that his mission was from the church at Jerusalem, and opposed him precisely because it was not. He was not willing to be an apostle at all, if not from God, and from Jesus Christ.

It is to Antioch they go, not to Jerusalem; they return to their starting-point, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God. The work of the Holy Ghost connects itself with Antioch, in its earthly relationship; the power is all from above. There the apostles recount the great things which God had done for them, and how He had opened the door among the

Gentiles. “And there they abode a long time with the disciples.”

In the preceding narrative we find this history of the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles, by formal apostolic mission, the difficulties, the position of the Gentiles and of the Jews, the circumstances under which it was propagated in the world, and that independently of Judaism and of Jerusalem, a work in which Peter took no part. God worked mightily by him among the Jews; but, except that he was employed to introduce the first Gentile, he had nothing to do with them. He was the apostle of the circumcision, and with the other apostles formally gave up the work among the Gentiles to Paul and to Barnabas; Galatians 2.

Chapter 15.

But the Jews—those at least who made a profession of Christianity with Satan as their instrument—sought to place the Gentiles under the yoke of Judaism, and destroy the work of God within, if they could not hinder it without the church. They went down from Judaea to Antioch, teaching the brethren that they must be circumcised, and observe the law of Moses, in order to be saved. The moment was a critical one. It was necessary, according to them, that the Gentiles should submit to the law of Moses, and become Jews, or that two separate assemblies should be formed. Paul and Barnabas, however, oppose themselves to these exactions. But God did not permit the question to be settled at Antioch.

It will readily be understood, that, had the cause of the Gentiles been vindicated by a decision given at Antioch, and, in spite of the Jews, they had preserved their

liberty, the danger would have been imminent of two assemblies being formed, and of unity being lost. All the spiritual and apostolical power of Paul therefore was insufficient to overcome the opposing spirit at Antioch, and decide the question. It was God's will that it should be decided at Jerusalem, and that the Christian Jews themselves, the apostles, the elders, and the whole assembly, should pronounce the freedom of the Gentiles; and that thus holy liberty and unity should be secured. It is decided, therefore, that Barnabas and Paul shall go to Jerusalem concerning this matter. We learn from Galatians 2:2, that Paul went thither in obedience to direct revelation.

God permitted that these Jews, without mission, zealous without God for the law, the authority of which over the conscience had been terminated by the cross, should raise this question, so that it might be definitively settled. The apostles and elders, therefore, meet together. It seems that all the believers may have been present, since verse 12 speaks of the multitude; however it is the apostles and elders who meet together. Paul and Barnabas relate what has happened in their journey—the conversion of the Gentiles—and the brethren rejoice with great joy. Here the most simple hearts enjoy with simplicity the grace of God. But at Jerusalem they met with greater difficulty. Nothing could be more opposed to grace than the doctrine of the Pharisees, which asserted that righteousness must be obtained by works, and by the administration of ordinances.

Arrived at Jerusalem, they declare there also all things that God has done with them. But here God in His grace manifests the question as having been produced by the hardness of the heart; that is, that some of the sect of

the Pharisees who had believed demanded that the Gentiles should be circumcised. I do not believe, however, that it is Paul or Barnabas who relates this fact, which had happened at Jerusalem. The apostles and elders then meet together. After much disputing (for the principals, led doubtless by the Holy Ghost, were wise enough to allow all who thought themselves capable to give their opinion; and in order that after the thoughts of men the voice of God might be heard) Peter reminds the assembly how God had chosen him first to bear the gospel to the Gentiles, and that the Spirit had been given to Cornelius without his being circumcised; that God Himself had borne witness to them by the Holy Ghost just in the same way as to the believing Jews; that He had made no difference between them, purifying their hearts by faith. He acknowledges the yoke of the ordinances, and warns them not to tempt God by putting it on the neck of the Gentiles. For did not they themselves believe that they had been saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus, and not by ordinances?

Then all the multitude kept silence, and Paul and Barnabas declared what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. (Here, at Jerusalem, Barnabas is always mentioned first; it is probable that he spoke more than Paul, relating what had been done. Paul had laboured more than any other; but at Jerusalem it was natural that Barnabas should be more forward than Paul.)

Then James, who held the first place at Jerusalem (see Acts 12:17; 21:18; Gal. 2:12), gives a summary of the judgment of the assembly, which no one opposes, and, by the aid of the Holy Ghost, a definite form to the thought of God, expressing His will respecting the

Gentiles. The work of the Holy Ghost is here in the first place remarkable; and also His full liberty, so that all the thoughts of men are brought to light, and given utterance to. In the next place, what God proposed to reveal by Peter in the case of Cornelius; and then the wonders that had been wrought by the hands of Barnabas and Paul among the Gentiles. Such is what seemed good to the Holy Ghost, who was given to Cornelius, and who wrought also among the Gentiles with signs and wonders by the hands of those who were sent out from Him.

Then James (who, as we have seen, represented the Judaic spirit, and in whose mind the feelings of the assembly at Jerusalem concurred, but who was fully under the influence of the Holy Ghost) expresses the thought of that assembly, and of the eleven apostles of Jerusalem, whom we may call Judaic, the judgment of God on the vital question under consideration; namely, that the Gentiles should not be subject to the law of Moses. The word of the prophets supported this sentence, for they had declared that there should be Gentiles on whom the name of the Lord should be called. It is with this intention that he cites the past.

Thus the Gentiles were free. The things they had to observe were duties before the publication of the law. The worship of one God, and the purity of man, were always obligatory. Noah had been prohibited from eating blood, in testimony that the life belonged to God. These great principles are established by this decision—the abstaining from idols—that life belongs to God alone, purity of life in man. They were principles necessary for the Gentiles, and corrected their evil habits; principles

recognised by the law, but which had not been distinctly laid down by it.

The assembly did not vote. All consented, under the influence of the Holy Ghost to what had been expressed. All agreed, apostles, elders, and the whole assembly, to send men chosen from among them to confirm by word of mouth the account of Barnabas and Paul, and the written decision which they took with them from Jerusalem. The apostles and elders assembled together to examine the question, but all the brethren joined with them in the letter sent to the Gentiles. Thus it was not the Gentiles who maintained their rights in spite of the assembly at Jerusalem, but by the wisdom and grace of God, the assembly at Jerusalem which acknowledges the liberty of the Gentiles as to the law; and unity is thus preserved.

We may add that it was not a general, or other assembly, for it was the assembly at Jerusalem, and the apostles and elders of that city, who met together, with a few from Antioch on the part of the Gentiles, to consider the question. The Councils, for many centuries called “general,” were convoked by the emperors to settle the disputes of the bishops: first in the east, on which occasions there were never more than six bishops present from the west; and afterwards when the Greek church separated from the Latin church, when there was no emperor from the west, councils being assembled by the popes without a single bishop from the east being present. These popes, without one bishop from the east, and profiting by the need of the emperor of the east who was menaced by the Turks, sought to unite the east to the west in the fifteenth century at Florence, but the attempt failed.

What we have here is that the apostle and the Judaic assembly, by which God had begun the work, set the Gentiles free from the law; and unity is preserved. We learn too how the Holy Ghost gives unity of thought concerning the questions which had arisen, since the gathering was waiting on the Lord. Thus is the liberty of the Holy Ghost preserved to the Gentiles, and, by the goodness of God the unity of the whole assembly maintained. It is declared that no commission had been given to those who had disturbed the Gentiles, subverting their souls. Subsequently, after much long-suffering on the part of God the Jews are called, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, to give up Judaism. The law and Christianity cannot be united.

Paul and Barnabas, then, taking leave of Jerusalem, come to Antioch, assemble the multitude, and give them the letter. The brethren, having read it, rejoice for the consolation. Thus was the state of the whole assembly settled, and also the relationship between the Jews and Gentiles. The necessary rule for them is established. They are to walk well, avoiding certain things. Judas and Silas remain for a time with the disciples at Antioch, exhorting them, and rejoicing in this new fellowship of the love of the assembly at Jerusalem for the brethren among the Gentiles. Then Judas leaves them, but Silas, drawn towards these new brethren, remains at Antioch. Paul and Barnabas also remain there, teaching the brethren; and many others likewise interest themselves on their behalf; for the power of the Holy Ghost was working in their midst. Life was fresh in those days.

After some time Paul, active and full of love, his work accomplished for the moment at Antioch, turns towards the gatherings he had founded, desiring to know how it

fared with them. But now Barnabas, like Peter before him, disappears from the scene. Not that he no longer worked for the Lord, but he did not maintain himself at the same level of service of Paul. Eclipsed in the work when with him, now he disappears altogether. A good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, he was yet not detached from everything as was Paul, for whom, according to his call on the way to Damascus, Christ glorified and His own was all in all.

This remarkable servant of God knew no longer anything after the flesh—a consecration necessary to the founder of the church of God. He had given up Judaism that he might become a minister of the economy of the church. See 1 Cor. 3:10; Eph. 3:1, 2; Col. 1:23-25. This economy had always existed in the counsels of God, but after the delay granted by His patience till the preceding mission of Paul from Antioch, which mission was then only put into execution, it is put on its true footing, on account of the attachment of Barnabas to things which were only objects of natural affection. John Mark was the son of the sister of Barnabas, and the island of Cyprus his native country; Col. 4:10; Acts 4:36.

Barnabas was quite disposed to accompany Paul in his journey, but he wished to take Mark with him; this, however, was displeasing to Paul, for Mark had left them in the preceding journey at Perga. He had not courage sufficient to confront the difficulties of the work outside of Cyprus. Paul only thought of God, Mark of the circumstances; but it is not thus that difficulties are to be overcome. It is possible that the flesh may have manifested itself in Paul; but at all events he could not boast of being in the right. Paul did not think of the economy entrusted to him, but of what according to

faith suited the work—the principle of life and heart necessary to accomplish it. He did not know the results, but what was necessary to produce them. Separation was necessary, and that God had wrought out in him. Still acerbity was unnecessary. At the bottom Paul was right, and the hand of God was with him. Even where the purpose of the heart is just, the flesh may very soon manifest itself.

Barnabas separates himself, and sets out for Cyprus, his country, taking Mark, his nephew, for the work of the Lord, but no longer the companion of Paul in the work to which God had called him. We do not forget the real worth of Barnabas, a true servant of Jesus, to whom the Holy Ghost Himself has borne witness; only he was not suited to that work. We learn ourselves that a heart consecrated to the Lord, without other attachment, separated from everything, is alone suited to represent Christ in a ministry such as that of Paul, and indeed in every true ministry.

Affection is good, but it is not consecration. Woe to us if we have not natural affection—it is a sign of the last times (2 Tim. 3:8); but these are not suited to such a work, a work which demands that one should not know anything after the flesh. Natural affection is not the "new creation," though fully recognised by God in Christ Himself, when He was not in the work; neither is natural affection the power of the Holy Ghost, which alone produces the effects of grace in the work of God.

Barnabas then goes his way; such was his will. Paul chooses Silas, and is recommended by the brethren to the grace of God—a second ordination if it were a question of that, but it is quite another thing. And he

went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches. Remark here that many had been formed where the apostle had not before been, as he found the first time he passed through the island of Cyprus.

Chapter 16.

Now from the beginning of chapter 16 down to the end of chapter 20 we have the public ministry of Paul among the Gentiles during many years when he has commenced his apostolic ministry (as under the grace and direction of the Lord, head of the work), having undertaken it, it being laid upon his heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, and taking with him first of all Silas, and afterwards other co-labourers— but always to help him—in a work, in which by the authority of the Lord and led of the Spirit, he held the first place; the activity, the direction, and the movement proceeded from him, the others who accompanied him being only co-labourers and being under his direction: but he stands alone now as apostle of the Gentiles. Rom. 11:13; Eph. 3; Rom. 1:13, 15; Gal. 2:7, 8.

We have seen that now Barnabas has separated himself. Paul (1 Cor. 3), as a wise master builder has laid the foundation; others worked independently, as Barnabas, Apollos, etc. But Paul had the revelation of the mystery of the church, and the administration of the economy among the Gentiles to found and set in order everything. See 1 Cor. 16:1; 7:17: and many other passages. Timothy, and Tims, and Silas, and many others named in his epistles, laboured under his direction; and he sent them wherever the exigencies of the work required. He had already taken with him Silas; and now, having

returned to Lystra and Derbe, he chooses Timothy to whom the brethren bore a good testimony.

It appears that Paul laid his hands upon him (2 Tim. 1:6), the young man having been marked out by prophecy, as he had been himself; then the testimony of the elders was added, and they also laid on their hands; 1 Tim. 4:14. It is possible that Paul may have laid his hands upon him when he visited Derbe on his first journey.11 That, however, is not said: at the same time, it was known by the brethren of Lystra and of Iconium, as also at Derbe; prophecy had marked him out; and the testimony of all, manifested by the laying on of the hands of the elders, confirmed it. Paul conferred on him the gift of the Spirit (2 Tim. 1:6, 7) by the laying on of his hands, although it may not be said openly when. It is quite possible that he might have been active already in that locality, but he was specially gifted for the present work by that imposition of hands of the apostle.

There yet remains a special fact to remark upon. Confusion had entered into the practical life of the Jews, as among the Christians. The mother of Timothy was a Jewess, his father a Greek; a thing unlawful among the Jews. His mother was pious (it is not said if it was before his conversion or after); also his grandmother was so; 2 Tim. 1. Now such a marriage was totally contrary to the custom of the Jews. See Neh. 13:23-31; Ezra 9, 10. According to these books the sons and daughters were heathen, and ought to be rejected and sent away, as well as the wife. It was a disorder. Paul availing himself, not of the law but of the privileges of grace, and thinking of the Jews, of whom there were many in those regions, circumcises Timothy. This was not according to Judaism; on the contrary, it was against its order, but he took

away what would have been a stumbling-block for the Israelites. It was pleasing to the Jews: he did it to gain them; in a word, it was not a legal act, quite the contrary. It was an act of superiority to the law. The Jews all knew that his father was a Greek; and the position of Timothy, his mother being a Jewess, was scandalous for them, and the apostle takes away the scandal. The hearts of the Jews would find themselves contented; and they would have had something to say if the son of a Greek, by whom his mother had been rendered impure, had presented to them the gospel. It was an arbitrary act, but the scandal was taken away, and he went against the prejudices of his people. But when the Jews wished to force him to circumcise Titus, he yielded to them not even for a moment; Gal. 2:3-5.

At the same time, as they passed “through the cities they delivered the decrees of the apostles and the elders for to keep”; a perpetual testimony, if the Christian Jews should wish to put their brethren from among the Gentiles under the law of Moses, that they acted against the thoughts and authority of the apostles and of the elders, of those whom the Lord had established for Christ by the Holy Ghost, who in the Jewish church itself were as an authority. That the Judaisers were not in any way authorised by the chief men gives a source of joy to the Gentile brethren thus established in the faith.

And remark how the Christian faith is now spread throughout all the regions where Paul prosecuted his labours; and the number of those gathered together increased daily. Now we follow his labours in other countries and regions.

Here we find another precious truth: the perpetual direction of God by the way, be it directly by the Spirit, or be it by other intimations. Paul was sent to preach the gospel to the entire creation under heaven; but that field is large, and so he labours under the authority of the Lord, the Son, who is over the house of God; as also He was announced as Lord and Saviour to poor sinners. They execute then this mission in Phrygia, and in the regions of Galatia. He had already commenced in Phrygia on his first journey, but now he enters Galatia, a large province, for the first time. These had suddenly gone astray from the right way, through the means of Judaising Christians: people who wished, as we have seen, to join the law to Christianity. We possess the epistle written by the faithful care of the apostle to deliver them from their error: an epistle more severe than all, since they had taken away the divine foundation of righteousness and true holiness —more severe than that to the Corinthians, who had committed nevertheless sins more horrible than the heathen, and had got into deplorable disorder. He says all the good he can to the Corinthians, although he does not spare them as regards their deeds, but reproaches them; and also he did not wish to visit them until they repented. But as to the Galatians he says nothing loving to commence with, but sets himself at once to reproach them, and at the end salutes no one. Troubled in his heart he does not know how to take them (chap. 4:20), he would wish to be among them in order to speak according to their wants. His love had not grown weak, but he travailed again in birth of them until Christ was formed in them. We see the power of the love of the blessed apostle. Moses, weary, fatigued by the unbelief of the people, asks if he had brought forth all this people that he

should carry them as a father. Paul, full of the love of Christ, is contented to do it a second time rather than lose them. He was their father in the faith; so powerful is the love of Christ in the heart!

After having crossed Phrygia and Galatia, the Holy Ghost forbids them to preach in Asia. Later he dwelt about three years in Ephesus, the capital of the province; and all Asia12 heard the word of God. Arrived in Mysia they essay to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit of Jesus suffers them not. Having passed by Mysia, they come to Troas. There Paul has a vision in a dream. It was not the open direction of the Spirit; it was left to spiritual intelligence to understand the meaning. A man of Macedonia appeared to him, beseeching him to come and succour them.

As Paul lived in the things of God, he interpreted the vision as his mission, by the knowledge he had both of the thoughts of God and of the wants of men, and passed over therefore at once into Macedonia. Perhaps it is hot very important, but we may remark here, that for the first time we find the writer speak in the first person: “We endeavoured”; that is to say, Luke, who has written the facts, becomes now the companion of Paul in his work.

Here the question presents itself: In what manner and to what extent can we expect the direction of God in our work? The answer is analogous to that which.we have already given with respect to the intervention of God in order to liberate us from dangers. We cannot expect visible and sensible interventions; but we can expect with certainty the care and direction of God by His Spirit in the heart, if we walk with Him— “To be filled

with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" —to be led by the Spirit if we walk in humility. See Rom. 8:14; Col. 1; also Psalm 32:8, 9. I do not doubt that, if we walk with God and look to Him, the Spirit will put in our hearts the special things that He wishes us to do. Only it is important that we keep in memory the word of God, in order that it may be a guard against all our own imaginations; otherwise, the Christian who lacks humility will do his own will, often taking it for the Holy Ghost. That is but the deceitful folly of his heart; first, that it knows them; secondly, taking it for the Holy Ghost: but, I repeat, he who looks with humility to the Lord will be conducted by the Lord in the way; and the Holy Ghost who dwells in him will suggest to him the things which He wishes him to do. "He that is spiritual judgeth all things, and he himself is judged of no one… We have the mind of Christ," 1 Cor. 2:15, 16.

Here then the apostle gathers that the Lord had sent him to Macedonia, and goes there. He stops at Philippi, the principal city of the country and a Roman colony. He commences, as he always does, with the Jews. It appears that there was not a synagogue there. It was the custom of the Jews to have their worship in such a case, as it is still, on the banks of the river—I believe, for the sake of purification. There were but a few women there: Paul contented himself with them, and spoke to them of Christ, and of salvation through Him. There was Lydia, a proselyte who worshipped the true God; she was among these women, had not the knowledge of Christ, but the piety which does not neglect the worship of the Sabbath day in a far distant country, where it was not the natural occasion to observe it. The blessing is accorded at least

to that one in whose heart this faithfulness is found. The Lord opened the heart of Lydia to attend to the things spoken by Paul. She was a Gentile, but brought to the knowledge of the only true God; and she is another example of the difference between conversion and the knowledge of salvation in Christ.

There were many such worshippers—their souls were wearied with the folly and iniquity of paganism, which was insufficient to satisfy the needs of the soul, and through grace they were turned to the only true God known among the Jews, and they frequented the Jewish worship, without being circumcised. They were called religious persons, persons who served God. They listened to the apostle more than the Jews, and were often the occasion of their jealousy; of this class was Lydia. See chap. 17:17; and 13:16; where it is said, “and ye which fear God.” They are found without being named, in chapter 13:1, and distinctly verse 43, and also elsewhere. Lydia is baptised with all her house: and Paul and his companions enter her house and dwell there. It may be said that now the assembly was founded at Philippi.

But the enemy is not satisfied to allow the work to make progress, without doing anything to oppose it. On the contrary he works with deceit; he does not assail the work openly. He has the appearance of helping it, certainly not recognising Christ as Lord, because then he would no longer be Satan (the adversary), but flattering the apostle, in order to be able to mix himself up with the work of the Lord, to accredit himself with this union, and to spoil it at the same time. He acts thus with more finesse in order that Christians may be less wise to refute him. To be supported by the world (and

Satan is the prince of it) will appear to be a great help to the progress of the gospel. The enemy disguises himself, makes himself the friend of the servants of God and of the work, transforms himself into an angel of light. The Gibeonites with deceit made themselves the friends of Israel, and in consequence they were never conquered, as our friends are not conquered. Thus, when the Christian or the assembly, mixes itself with the world, the loss is always on the side of the Christian, because the world in its nature is always with its motives, but the flesh is always in the Christian. He may draw near to the world, but not the world to the Spirit. The testimony, however, is lost. Wine mixed with water is no longer pure wine, it has lost its taste. The friendship of the world is enmity against God.

The world seems amiable when it draws near to Christians and their testimony, but it draws near to Christians to spoil their testimony, and to put itself in esteem; but to Christ it cannot draw near. The spirit of Python can flatter the servants of God in order to gain them; it can speak of God, of the most high God, even of the way of salvation, but not of Christ Lord and Saviour, of the state of sin and guilt in which man is, in which he is lost. That would be to confess that he who says such things is lost. That is quite another story. When the world unites itself to Christians, their testimony is lost, and the fault is always that of the Christians. They accept the world, because they have already lost true spirituality, the love of Christ rejected by the world, the love of the holy glory of His cross in which His heavenly glory was exhibited in this world.

But the apostle does not seek to excite the enmity of Satan, he does not accept that testimony, he keeps

himself ever separate, neither does he act so as to change it into open opposition. He continues quietly on his way. At last he can no longer bear the voice of the unclean spirit, it being so grievous to his heart that he associated himself with him; he casts him out by the power of the Holy Ghost. Suddenly the enmity of the natural heart under the influence of the world is revealed. And that influence is more fatal for man than the possession of the body and faculties.

The Lord drove out the legion with a word; but the world, frightened by the manifestation of divine power, cast out Jesus from its confines. Similarly here, the demon being cast out, the masters of the damsel through human motives to which the demon lent himself, seeing that their gain was lost, stirred up a persecution against Paul and Silas.

What the servants of the most high God do is now of no consequence. Man’s god is money, power and human glory. Satan never wishes that the power of God should be cast out. To be recognised, accredited, to join himself to the excellency of the truth pleases him, because he knows well that true power is with God, and thus that which remains of the truth in effect increases his influence, for that is now only increased, not destroyed. He will speak sufficiently of the truth to deceive Christians if it were possible, in order that, such as he is as prince of the world, he may not the less be in light.

The pure light manifests him, and thus is it that Christianity, and Christians, less wise than the apostle, have mixed themselves with the world, and the result is that Christianity lies under the power of Satan. The apostle did not act thus; but now it is quite possible

persecution will arise, and that is what came to pass here. If the enemy cannot accredit himself with the gospel, he will oppose it.

The motives were purely human, the influence that of Satan. The motives presented to the magistrates were nothing but false pretexts. They worked on the pride and the fear of the authorities, who desired peace, and that was disturbed by the enemies, not by the Christians. Besides the gospel did not oppose Roman dignity which possessed the city, it being a colony. The magistrates ask no more; they had stirred up a multitude which strove for its privileges. Rending their clothes, they command them to be beaten, and then send them to prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely. He, having received such a charge, thrusts them into the inner prison, making their feet fast in the stocks.

All then was tranquillised; but the magistrates thought nothing of justice, nor of paying costs13 for poor evangelists. But God has not forgotten them, and bears marked testimony to His servants. He permits them to be punished unjustly, and it is their glory to make no resistance. It is a means by which still brighter testimony may be given to His word, and to His servants.

They are thrust then into the inner prison, and there sing praises to God, and the prisoners hear them. Suddenly there is a great earthquake, the doors of the prison are opened, and every one’s bands are loosed. God intervenes for His own, and to bear testimony to His word. When persecution is allowed, the wickedness of man can do much, but he cannot hold against the power of God those who fall into his hands. The jailor wishes to

kill himself; but Paul crying out that they were all there, prevents him from doing so. Leading out Paul and Silas, he asks them what he must do to be saved. The answer is simple, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” The word is then announced to him and his, and he is baptised with his house. He then cares for his prisoners, and washes their stripes, being filled with joy and peace with all his house.

Tranquillity restored, the magistrates, believing that all trouble is thus ended, send word to the jailor to let Paul and Silas go. But it was a struggle between the testimony of God and the power of Satan; it was necessary that the unjust magistrates should own their fault, and the rights of the gospel of God. Paul did not wish to excite this struggle (an important warning to us), but to continue his work peacefully. The devil was seeking to mix himself up with the work, to associate himself, to the eyes of the world, with what was done by the servants of God. This provoked the apostle. It was necessary either to receive the testimony of the devil, and join his name to that of Christ, or to enter into a struggle. He casts out, therefore, the unclean spirit; and open war is thus at once declared.

Satan is the prince of this world; and the world, stirred up by the present power of God in the work of the Spirit, is, unless kept down by God, stronger than His servants. Here God permits the world to manifest itself in violence and injustice, in the multitude as much as in the magistrates. The servants of God submit to this injustice, are beaten and cast into prison, their enemies being the guilty ones, as is nearly always the case. I say nearly, because it is possible for Christians to fail in

wisdom, and to provoke a struggle without cause. They do not resist; but here the power of the Holy Ghost and the state of their souls shew complete superiority to circumstances. Full of joy in prison and in the stocks, they can sing praises. Testimony is rendered even to the prisoners. As far as the body is concerned, the world is stronger than the Christian, if God allows it to act; but in soul, the Christian is always above circumstances, if he can realise the presence of God. His presence is the greatest of all circumstances, and overcomes the others. One can rejoice even in sufferings, as we see in Acts 5:41; Romans 5:5.

Moreover, God makes use of the circumstances, and enters, so to speak, into the struggle Himself; the doors are opened, and the bands are loosed. In body man is powerless, unless God see fit to intervene; and often He does so by His providence, if not in a miraculous way. All were witnesses or convinced that God was victorious in the struggle—though some, in spite of themselves. The magistrates had taken part in the wrong with great injustice, and it was necessary, therefore, that they should own their fault. Now that all was calm, they sought, in the wisdom of the world, to let the affair blow over in silence. But when God works and shews Himself, He makes it plain that He has rights in this world.

Paul and Silas were in prison against all the rights of God and of men; and the magistrates are obliged by the firmness of Paul to own their fault, and to ask the servants of the Lord as a favour to depart. This, as it suited them, they do without delay; only, being perfectly free, they enter into the house of Lydia, see the brethren, comfort them, and depart.

When Paul sought to make use of his rights as a Roman in order to arrest injustice, he lost his liberty, and was sent a prisoner to Rome, although the Lord had directed everything. But here he did not attempt to arrest injustice; he submitted, only taking advantage of this right afterwards, when it was a question of the innocence of the gospel and of its conduct, and when it happened that the magistrates, and not he, were in the wrong.

But God has this peculiar work in the world, the blessings of grace; and makes sure of all this for the conversion of the jailor. He works as a man of the world at his post; but by this manifest intervention of God, he is awakened, convinced of sin, and given to feel his need of salvation. Now that all call themselves Christians, one asks if a man is a good Christian, truly converted; but then all were heathens or Jews, and became Christians. Now Christianity is salvation. The grace of God has brought salvation into the world in the Son of God; and by His work on the cross, it is announced by the Holy Ghost. The need makes itself felt when the conscience is moved by the Holy Ghost. What it seeks for is salvation, as here does the jailor. The answer is simple and clear: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

The object of faith is the person of the Lord Jesus, and the redemption accomplished by Him; and all believers, reaping the benefits of this work, are saved. Now one investigates and scrutinises in order to know whether one has faith in the heart, and whether it be true faith. We all pass more or less through this state, but true peace is never to be found there. It is perhaps, however, useful in humbling us, and teaching us that in us dwells

no good thing. But we are not called upon to believe in the faith which is in us, but to believe in Christ Jesus; and God declares that all believers are justified, and have eternal life. I do not examine my eyes to know whether I see, but look at the object before them, and know that I see. People quote the passage in 2 Corinthians 13:5; but those who do so deceive themselves, leaving out the correct beginning of the passage, “Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, … examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.” The apostle shews them their folly in doubting his true apostleship. If Christ had not spoken by him, since they had received his word, how was it that he had been the means of their conversion? For the same reason he continues to inquire, “Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you?” Christ therefore had spoken by his mouth. There were many proofs of his apostleship. Here he shews them their stupidity, because if he were not an apostle, they would not be Christians. Of their conversion they had no doubt. If we examine ourselves to know whether we walk as Christians, we do well; but if we do so to know whether we are Christians, it is not according to the word.

Faith looks towards Jesus, not towards self. The experience of the examination of the heart, in order to discover what passes there to make one believe, leads us to see that it is impossible thus to find peace, or even victory, for we are looking at what is behind us; but when we are convinced of this, the answer of God is there—He has given salvation in Christ, and he who believes is justified. The Lord says, “Thy sins are forgiven; go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee,” Luke 7. The woman looked to Jesus, and believed His word, not

thinking of the state of her own heart. The state of her heart, the conviction that she could not find peace and salvation in herself, led her to look to Jesus, and in Him she found peace. The gospel gives the answer of God to the heart clearly and fully. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

I learn by experience that in me dwells no good thing, and that I have not the strength to conquer. I cease to look towards myself, as though I could become better. The flesh is always there; the will may be good (in a converted man), but practice does not correspond to will. Not amendment, but salvation, is needful to us: and that we possess in Christ by faith, and, in salvation, peace. Being unable to accomplish justice in ourselves, we submit to the justice of God. By the faith that Christ Himself is our justice before God, we learn by experience what we are ourselves. This experience is itself the fruit of the work of the word by the Spirit in the heart; but by this we learn that we are lost, that, looking to Christ, we are saved. “Believe, and thou shalt be saved.” Good works are what suit the position we then occupy. It is the same in human relationships of children, wives, servants; it is necessary to be in the relationship, or the duties do not exist. When we are saved, we become the sons of God, and then we find the duty of sonship; but it cannot exist before we are sons. The duty of man as the creature of God existed, but on that ground we are lost. Christian duty does not begin till we are Christians. It is remarkable, here and elsewhere, how whole households are admitted to the Christian assembly.

Chapter 17.

To suffer with patience, to sing in the midst of tribulation— this is power; then with the same strength we can, when free, carry on the Lord's work, with like courage. So says the apostle, referring to such circumstances, in 1 Thessalonians 2:2; having been stoned and shamefully entreated at Philippi, he boldly and energetically continues to preach the gospel at Thessalonica. It is there we find him at this point of our narrative. God leads through persecution just as by all other means. The Apostle selects localities where there were synagogues. Passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, he stops at Thessalonica; where was a synagogue. It was a large city, where to this day many Jews are to be found. "To the Jew first and also to the Greek," characterised his work.

In Philippi we find Satan's opposition apart from the Jews, for, though Paul had there sought the Jews also, they had no part whatever in the conflict. The enemy had desired to identify himself with the work of the gospel, falsifying it in order to avoid the destruction of his own power: but he does not support open opposition. But when the religious element is present—that is a religion which boasts of possessing the rights conferred by God on His own on the earth, the professors of which do not submit to the truth—this is always a source of persecution. In Philippi it was simply an arrogant and self-interested people who spurned all religions which spoke of the true God, as well as everything else except its own superstitions, and only sought to preserve peace under the government of Satan. It was the world that cast out Paul, as the Gadarenes did Jesus. It could

endure the manifestation neither of the truth, nor of the power of God.

In the narrative which follows we again find the religious element in enmity to the truth; the Jews jealous of the gospel of grace, and of the Gentiles, to whom it was announced, although the former had the first place in its administration. For three sabbaths Paul reasons with the Jews of Thessalonica in the synagogue, according to the custom, shewing them that it was expedient that Christ should suffer, and rise again, and that Jesus was this Christ. Some of the Gentiles, who worshipped the true and one God, whose need had led them to recognise Him who had revealed Himself, believed. They were many in number, and of the chief women not a few.

The blessing of God does not fail to excite the jealousy of the Jews, and to the enmity of the human heart all means are lawful. Stirring up the people of the baser sort, they assault the house of Jason, seeking to bring out the servants of God, but they do not find them there. Jason, however, and certain other brethren they drag before the rulers of the city, accusing them of teaching doctrines opposed to the authority of Caesar, and of saying that there was another king, Jesus. But the rulers, troubled, it is true, with the people, were wiser than those of Philippi; for, taking security of Jason, they let them go. The chief culprits, Paul and his companions, not being found, were not there; and the brethren, finding the door shut for the moment against the work, send Paul and Silas to Berea, a neighbouring city.

In the epistles to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:14), where also the apostle speaks of the state of the Jews (2

Thess. 1:4), it appears that immediately after the apostle's departure, a violent persecution sprang up, and that the converts suffered greatly, but remained faithful, so that their faith became celebrated everywhere. It was to these that the apostle wrote his two first epistles, immediately after his departure from Athens and Corinth, in order to encourage them to persevere, having sent Timothy from Athens, to know if they stood fast in the faith (1 Thess. 3:1). In reading these epistles, and Acts 18:6, we find that the first was written from Athens when Silas and Timothy had rejoined him (Acts 17:15; 1 Thess. 1:1). Then he had sent Timothy to Thessalonica, who, on his return, brings good tidings of the state of the Thessalonians. The first epistle is then written. It seems that Silas and Timothy had come back and again rejoined the apostle, when he had already left Athens and was come to Corinth; Acts 18:5.

Of this journey we have no account, but it is the proof of the tender care with which the apostle watched over the new converts, and sought to establish them in the faith and path of Christ. The two epistles are remarkable for the freshness and affection of the communications, of which they are full, and especially the first, for the testimony which the apostle could render to the state of the disciples.

It will be useful to examine for a little what the apostle taught during his short stay at Thessalonica. We have very little, almost nothing, of the apostle's discourses outside of the synagogue. At Athens he makes a speech in the Areopagus, but he does not preach. He preached, it is said, Jesus and the resurrection. Let us gather up what is said here. In the synagogue he maintained that

Christ should suffer and rise again from among the dead; moreover, he announced the kingdom of God, because He was accused of having taught that there was another king, Jesus (chap. 20:25). Short though the time was in Thessalonica, yet during his sojourn there, he had taught the disciples the coming of the Lord; which, in reading the Epistle, is perfectly clear. The disciples had learnt that Jesus had delivered them from the wrath to come, the resurrection, and the expectation of the Son of God from heaven; that they were called to suffer with Christ, and to walk in holiness; the coming of the Lord with fire for judgment, and that with all His saints; that they should be caught up to meet the Lord; that the man of sin should be revealed, and that the mystery of iniquity was already working, but that they were called to share the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. He taught salvation by the truth and by faith through the power of the Holy Ghost who sanctified them for God; and all this by grace, to those who were chosen for salvation. Even the peculiarities of the last days were communicated to them; 2 Thess. 2:5.

But all this was for the disciples; only the coming of the Lord in judgment of the living—this world—was announced to all, and they were exhorted to flee from the wrath to come, from which Jesus was the deliverer. It was necessary now to announce facts known to all; but if he speaks of salvation, the person of the Lord, as also His coming, has a far greater place in his doctrine than in that of the preachers of to-day. A present salvation is clearly announced, through Christ dead for us, so that we might live with Him. That which was everywhere presented for salvation is described with much simplicity and clearness in 1 Corinthians 15:1-11,

Christ put to death for our sins, buried, and raised up the third day. But here also the facts hold a greater place than now. We reason on the value of the facts, and this is necessary; but the more the facts are put in evidence, the more will the preaching be powerful.

While the people are occupied with Jason, Paul sets out for Berea, and with undiminished courage enters into the synagogue of that city. Here the grace of God is manifestly with him, to dispose the hearts of the Jews to listen, and to search the word, and many believe. But the unhappy Jews carry on their work, and come from Thessalonica, to stir up the people against Paul and the others. It is mournful to see their permanent hatred to the gospel. But it is ever thus with an old religion set aside by truth which its professors will not receive.

A few brethren conduct Paul to Athens, and he sends an order to Silas and Timothy to join him there at once. But with all this, the enemy does nothing but order the path of the gospel, according to the will of God.

Now at Athens the sight of the idolatry ardently practised in that city pressed heavily on the spirit of the apostle. He reasons in the synagogue with the Jews, and daily in the market with them that met with him. Athens had been a city famous for the glory of its arts and of its arms, and for its schools of philosophy. Having succumbed to the Roman yoke, it had lost its importance, and lived in idleness, seeking for some new thing, still philosophising, and boasting in the memory of its ancient glory in pagan philosophy, surpassed perhaps by that of Alexandria and Tarsus (where Paul himself had been educated), although where the leaders of

Roman society studied. The fruit was not great in this vain and idle city, but the instruction for us is precious.

The apostle's discourse at the Areopagus was not the preaching of the gospel. It was his apology before an ancient tribunal whose decisions had, in times gone by, possessed great weight, but which then, though still allowed to exist, no longer retained its ancient importance. But the fact that the apostle was obliged to present himself before the tribunal, gave him the opportunity of manifesting the wisdom and grace he possessed through the Spirit of God. As we have seen he preached in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia. In the market-place, where the philosophers and townspeople met together, he announced Jesus and the resurrection, His person, His victory over death, the testimony that God had accepted the sacrifice of Christ, and moreover that in Him we are admitted into a new creation (a position which Adam, even in innocence, never occupied) the kingdom of the second, of the last Adam.

I do not say that all these points were unfolded, but the apostle announced the grand foundations on which all these truths are built up. He did so according to the need and capacity of his hearers; and nobody is so incapable as a philosopher, and those under his influence and who walk in the vain thought of being something, when in reality they are nothing, and such was the true character of the Athenians. Knowledge is blinding. Human intelligence does not know God. God enters the conscience when He speaks in order to make Himself known; and in proportion to the pretension of the human mind to intelligence, is the hardness and inaction of the conscience. It is as though dead, and man as though he had none, and therefore no capacity to

receive the truth whereby he may know God. These wise men thought that Jesus and the resurrection were gods, so far were they from the truth. The mind of man, and the activity of his intelligence, when it is a question of morality and of God, can do nothing but always drive him farther and farther away. He finds no basis for morality, and consequently no true rule; and when God is submitted to the human understanding, He is no longer God in any sense. God does not present Himself to man in order to know what he ought to be. Conscience and faith put God in His own place, and man in his true relation to God; and the word is the means of doing so, the word in which God reveals Himself, and shews what man is.

Some mocked the apostle, saying, “What will this babbler say?” Ridicule is often a means in the hands of the enemy to turn away souls from the truth, because men are afraid to identify themselves with what others despise. Conscience and moral courage are the very last things to be found in the heart of man: grace awakens conscience, and gives strength to follow it. Still here was something new; and that was always enough for the Athenians, fatigued by the nonentity of their existence. Accordingly they lead Paul to the Areopagus, once honourable and honoured, in order to know what this new doctrine might be. Because however frivolous philosophical opinions may be, they cannot quietly endure either truth or Christ. One human opinion may be as good as another; but the testimony of God operates on the conscience, and demands the heart.

Paul, surely taught by the Holy Ghost, replies in the Areopagus with admirable wisdom, and a calm love which lays hold on the sole circumstance to which he

could attach the truth he desired to communicate to them. His practised eye had observed in the city the only little remnant of truth by which he could lead them to recognise their true position. It was not simply a declaration of the salvation of the soul, which had already occupied him in the synagogue and public market-place; here he explains the true character of the religion of idols, but with perfect delicacy; and seeks to bind that remnant of truth which the enemy had not been able to destroy, with truth more positive, with the name of Jesus, and with that which appealed to the conscience.

The people of the city, idle and at heart sceptical, were given up to idolatry; and, the circle of the gods being exhausted, they had dedicated an altar to the unknown God. It is said that in former times a fatal malady had reigned in the city; and that the inhabitants, having prayed in vain to all the gods to remove the plague, had consulted an oracle, who directed them to dedicate an altar to the unknown God. It is unnecessary, however, to seek for any special source of this worship. At the bottom of all idolatry there is the idea of God, corrupted, and taken possession of by Satan, so that men may worship demons; but the idea cannot be eradicated from the heart of man. Infidels seek to do so, but it always remains at the bottom of the heart, in spite of all their efforts. It is born with the birth of man, and creation bears witness too clear and too strong to allow the heart to believe that everything was made by nothing. And then conscience speaks too loud to allow it to be unhearkened to. Man does not want God and tries to forget Him; he reasons, and seeks diversions; but the thought always returns, and possibility makes itself felt.

He endeavours to get rid of the thought by every means, but still it is always there; and the thought of God always makes us feel guilty.

God is to be found in all idolatries, neglected and forgotten, it is true; but He exists in all mythologies, and is found in the conscience when awakened by fear. When men are in agony (so says a Christian of pagan times) they do not say, “Oh, immortal gods! “but “Oh God! a proof, I would add, of a soul naturally Christian.” They made great gods and little gods, placed a god or a goddess at fountains, in woods, and wherever they could see the operations of nature; but behind everything remained the deep feeling that there was one only and all-powerful God. Thus among the Brahmins in India, in Egypt, among the Sabeans, among the Scandinavians, there were gods without end, yet one God not worshipped but owned as the source of everything. This God, the Author of all, rested in darkness. In India not a single temple was ever dedicated to him, but still He exists and is the source of everything. Among the Sabeans, the ancient Persians, there was another kind of pagan religion which recognised Ahrim and Ahrmasda, a bad and a good god, and in which God was worshipped in fire, and which had no idol; there was another god as the source of these. I say source, because a creation was not owned among the pagans. See Hebrews 11:3.

The imagination, under the influence of Satan, created gods everywhere, but at the bottom the idea of God was there. And yet this God, the true, was unknown—deplorable state of mankind, deprived of God, of whom they stood in such deep need! thus enemies to His true knowledge, because the conscience, which makes responsibility felt, could not endure His presence,

because the heart desired things which the conscience in the presence of God condemned. They made gods who would help men to gratify their passions. Man cannot suffice to himself; he has lost God, and fears Him; his heart stoops to that which is more degraded than himself. He seeks, but in vain, to satisfy the need of his heart by means of objects which degrade him, and make him forget God, of whom the thought is anguish" to his heart.

God, the unknown God, now reveals Himself; and the apostle, with great happiness of thought laying hold of the inscription on the altar, announces the true God whom they did not know. This is not the gospel; but he identifies the God he had already preached in the gospel of Jesus and of the resurrection with the truth they themselves admitted, and, defending it, speaks to the conscience. The unknown God would judge the world by this Jesus, in that He had raised Him from the dead. This truth he applies to their conscience and to idolatry, under the yoke of which they were subjected. By the power of the Spirit in Paul they stood accused, convicted of having falsified the idea of God and denied His glory, the glory of the only Creator, for they had only recognised Him by the confession that He was unknown.

Here was what was done by the apostle. He announced to them clearly this true God, who had manifested Himself in the gift of life, and in the things necessary to sustain that life. Through the conscience He was then not far from each of them. During the times of ignorance, God had borne with the wanderings of man; He had passed them over without judgment. Now He was calling to all men everywhere to repent, because a day was appointed in the which He should judge the

world; He speaks of the judgment of this habitable earth, in righteousness by the Man whom He had ordained; whereof He had given assurance unto all men, in that He had raised Him from the dead. In this way He reveals by the power of the Spirit the one true Creator-God, the Sustainer of all things, the knowledge of whom had been lost in the folly of idolatry, into which man had been deluded by the enemy, who, by means of the passions of deceived beings, had made himself God. Then he declares the approaching judgment of this world by Jesus, the risen Man, but that grace, in the patience of God, invited all men to repent.

Such was the apostle's defence; not of himself, truly; but he brings his hearers into the presence of God, and sets forth that which the conscience could not deny, and that this was what they ought to have known (Rom. 1:19, 20). Then he reveals what was new, namely, that judgment was approaching, that it was to be executed by the Man established by God, of whom He had given assurance, in raising Him from the dead, as the public proof of His ways and power, which ended the path of man on earth, and overthrew the power of Satan. The accusers receive their own sentence. To the existence of God they say nothing, but many mock at the idea of resurrection.

It is the present exercise of the power of God that man cannot receive; let there be a God, and it is well; but let Him do something, let Him intervene presently, and man cannot willingly receive it. But the mighty word of the apostle touches some hearts even among this frivolous people. The harvest is small, but God does not leave Himself without testimony. A few, believing the gospel, join themselves to the servants of God; but the testimony being rendered, the apostle remains there no longer.

Philosophy and frivolity united, as is always the case, give a high opinion of self, are bad soil for grace, and do not deserve that God should wait long for the good will of vanity. Grace can be effective everywhere; but here testimony and judgment are given against philosophy and the pretensions of men.

Chapter 18.

There was but little fruit in this gifted but frivolous city: for God has chosen the foolish, the weak, and the despised things of the world, to bring to nought the things that are; and the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. The apostle pursues his journey to the other important Grecian centre, Corinth, a commercial city in a superb situation, but deeply corrupt, being dedicated to Venus, whose priestesses were given up to vice. Even at this time wealth abounded, and the city had become proverbial for luxury and dissoluteness.

The ambassador of God appears in the midst of this luxury, as a poor workman of the world; and we know from his letters that he refused to take anything from the wealthy Corinthians, while he received with joy the offering sent as the fruit of their love by the simple brethren of Philippi. There was afterwards another special reason why the apostle would not receive money from the Corinthians. This was that false teachers, seeking to profit by the work of Paul, pretended to labour without receiving anything; and Paul desired to take away every occasion of influence from these evil men, and that they should not pretend to that which was not equally verified in him.

Arrived then at Corinth, he finds two people of his own trade, and with them he lodges and works. There, in the simplicity of Christian life, the work of God begins. The Jews had, and always have, a trade. We are apt to believe that the apostles soared above all difficulties, because armed with divine authority, and that they were free from all fear. We, no doubt, who believe they have the Lord's authority, receive them as sent by Him: but the Gentiles recognised neither the Lord, nor those sent by Him. They were in the presence of the enemy's power. God had committed His word to them, that they might convey it to the world, which lay under the power of Satan; and this word they possessed in the weakness of the flesh. By faith they knew that the Lord would be with them; and certainly His faithfulness did not fail. But this is known by faith; and they felt all the difficulty of a work which introduced the light of God and the authority of His testimony in the midst of darkness, where the enemy reigned over the spirits of men.

It is a serious thing to make and carry on war for God against the prince of evil. We must know what we are doing, what the enemy is, and what He is whom we represent in this war, so that we may consider it according to the rules of a war of God, that He may sustain us, that the consciousness of His call may be with us, and that thus our faith and confidence in Him may not be interrupted. See how the apostle speaks of his entrance among the Corinthians; "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power," 1 Cor. 2:3, 4. One cannot do better than read the first four chapters of the first epistle: and for the

question of money, chapter 9; what was the testimony, the life, and the feeling of the apostle in 2 Corinthians 4, 6 and 10. And how deep and real his testimony in chapter 12 and especially in verse 9, the source of his power in the midst of weakness! For in this epistle, as elsewhere, we find what the apostle's own feeling were, and what his labours; his heart appears. In 2 Corinthians 11 the effect produced by sufferings is shewn.

With fear and much trembling then, he commences the work in this seat of Satan. First he reasons in the synagogue, as he did everywhere, "to the Jew first and also to the Greek." From Athens, Paul had sent Timothy, who had joined him there according to Acts 18:15, 16; 1 Thess. 3:2. Now Silas and Timothy return, and are found with Paul; Acts 17:5. Pressed in spirit by their presence, he bears still stronger testimony that Jesus was the Christ. He had laboured faithfully during their absence; but the presence of other Christians gives courage and strength to his spirit according to God. The feeling of what Christianity is fortifies the heart, and the state of unbelievers is more present to the mind, and more urgent to the heart. But the rights of Christ hold the first place in the apostle's heart; and when the Jews contradict and blaspheme, he leaves them, and, shaking his garments, says to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles."

Leaving them he enters into the house of a Gentile, one who worshipped the one true God. There were many such among the Gentiles, who, weary of the folly and iniquity of idolatry, worshipped in the synagogue, although they had not become Jews. It seems that he had left the house of Aquila and Priscilla. The house of a

Gentile who owned the one true God was suited to his work; and to him the work was everything. Still, he does not go far away from the synagogue; and Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, is converted with all his house, whether from the testimony rendered by Paul in the synagogue, or after he had left it. Moreover, the testimony now reaches the Corinthians, and many believe and are baptized. The work, rejected by the Jews, is now established in the city; for, notwithstanding its wickedness, the Lord had many people there.

Besides this, the Lord encourages Paul by a vision in the night, saying to him, “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace.” The Lord was with hirh, and saw fit to hold the door open. All things were in His hands, and He would not permit the enemy to hinder the work because of wicked men. “He openeth, and no man shutteth.” It is interesting to see how the Lord watches over the work, and over the hearts of His labourers. It is possible that direct communications and visions may not be given now as they were then; but God has not ceased to guide those who labour faithfully in His name, to manifest Himself to their hearts, and He holds still, as then, the keys; He opens, and no man shuts. It is sweet to see that, when we work for Him, He is with us, to speak to our hearts, and to direct us and regulate all our circumstances for His glory, and that according to a divine wisdom.

At Corinth the apostle remains a year and a half, teaching the word of God. The Jews, roused by the folly of their enmity against Christ and the gospel, seek to accuse Paul of a crime because he preached the gospel. They bring him before the judgment seat of the governor, a man profoundly indifferent to everything

religious. The apostle is accused of having persuaded men to worship contrary to the law. The proconsul, Gallio, drives them from the judgment seat. He was right. His office was not to maintain the Jewish law, but to preserve order and peace in the country. It was only another proof of the unreasonable and unbridled hatred of these poor people, who had refused the grace of God, and nourished themselves in enmity against all.

The crowd take Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things. For him the Jewish religion was a miserable and contemptible superstition, because it separated its professors from all the world; for the human heart loves not the truth that condemns the falsity of the world and of its ways. If the chief of this religion were beaten, it was nothing to him; in his eyes he deserved it, and so they could do it. Unbelief despises superstition, and yet supports it; but it hates the truth, and, if it can, persecutes it. The poor Jews united these true characters—the truth of the oneness of God, and superstition in ordinances, which separated them from all the Gentiles. Contempt and persecution were the only fruits of their assault on the apostle.

The position of this people is shewn in a special way in the narrative before us. But Paul’s relation with them is also shewn; we see to what an extent he was still bound to Jewish customs. He takes a vow and shaves his head in Cenchrea. He feels obliged in his heart to observe the feast at Jerusalem; and gives this to the Jews at Ephesus as his motive for not then remaining in their city. He is a true Jew, and acts like one; and the Spirit records these facts that we may understand the bonds which still held the spirit of the apostle. The state of a soul with regard

to religious habits is a different thing from the energy of the Spirit of God in the declaration of the truth. We shall see the effect of these bonds strongly pronounced at the end of his career, whether toward the Christians at Jerusalem, or in his submission to their wishes.

He leaves Corinth then with Priscilla and Aquila, after a work largely blessed. The history of this assembly we read in the two epistles addressed to it. We may remark that it is an example of the influence which the world, in the midst of which it is placed, exercises on the assembly of God. Breathing the same atmosphere, it is always in danger of following its habits of thought; the effect on the mind of surrounding things, which ever resound in the ears of Christians, and, alas! too often in their hearts. It is difficult to avoid being more or less associated with what surrounds us universally. What we need is faith, which lives in things unseen.

Paul does not stop at Ephesus, where the Jews were disposed to listen to him, but expresses the hope of seeing them again. Leaving Priscilia and Aquila, two quiet people, but faithful and consecrated to the Lord, he goes on towards Jerusalem. There he salutes the assembly, and sets out for Antioch, the starting-point of the gospel for the Gentiles, and from whence he had been sent by the Holy Ghost. At Jerusalem he merely salutes the assembly, for here we are on Christian, not Jewish, ground.

Chapter 19.

The apostles’ work is now situated in another provincial centre in the capital of the province of Asia, which was then only the south-west canton of Asia Minor, Caria, Lycia, etc. Paul had before been prohibited from

preaching the word in Asia, having been sent into Macedonia. Now, while he remains at the capital, all the province listens to the word of God. It is good to wait on God and to follow His direction; His work is then much better done, and with a certainty that human plans can never give us. Having passed through the upper portion of Asia Minor (the northern and central), Paul arrives at Ephesus. In this important city he remains nearly three years. Here also the power of his ministry is displayed in a remarkable way. It is the special subject of this chapter. We are ignorant as to how Apollos was fully introduced into the Christian position. He was doubtless baptized, and had received the Holy Ghost; but nothing is said about it. All we know is that he was instructed in the way of the Lord by means of Aquila and Priscilia through the word. It was independently of Paul, and had to be so.

In this chapter the apostolic power and the difference of the estate of the disciples of John the Baptist are clearly shewn. The apostle perceives something in the state of these disciples which did not correspond with the presence of the Holy Ghost— the essential distinction of the Christians. They beheve that the Messiah had come, and that Jesus was that Messiah; but they had not followed Him on the earth; they had remained with John, and had not received the Spirit. John had told them that Christ would baptize with the Spirit, but they did not know whether that Spirit had just come, according to the promise of God and the word of John. It is not meant, “If there be a Holy Ghost,” because all the Jews well knew that there was; but they did not know if the Holy Ghost spoken of by John had come. The words are the same as those in John 7:39. Whoever became a Christian

by baptism received the Holy Ghost. It was the seal of faith.

Paul explains to them that John had taught faith in Christ to come; but now He had come and moreover had been exalted to the right hand of God. They are then baptized in the name of the Lord. Paul lays his hands on them, and they receive the Holy Ghost, who bears witness of His presence by the gifts communicated to these disciples. It is a clear testimony to the apostolic power of Paul; Acts 8:14-17. The Holy Ghost was given without the laying on of hands, as on the day of Pentecost, then in the case of Cornelius, and generally with others. But among men the apostles alone possessed the power of communicating the Spirit. The miracles done by Paul's garments, and also by the shadow of Peter, likewise testify to the power vouchsafed to them by God. God desired to bear witness to the word of His grace.

This became still more remarkable when others, who pretended to cast out demons, undertook to make use of the name of Jesus. This placed the reality of the Lord's power over that of the devil in the clearest light. Certain Jews sought to profit by the power of the name of Jesus preached by Paul, but without having faith in His person. But the devil knew well with whom he had to do. He knew Jesus, and did not dare to resist Him; and he also well knew that Paul was His servant. But under what pretence did these unbelievers exercise authority over the power of the devil? The man possessed by the devil rises up against these Jews, and drives them out, so that they flee from the house naked and wounded.

What a testimony to the truth of Paul's mission, to the power by which he worked, and to the war that goes on in man between grace and the devil! It was not, and is not yet, the time for the Lord to manifest His power and His rights, in binding the enemy. His desire is that war should be carried on by man in faith, and by the power of the Spirit who dwells in believers. But it comes out clearly here, what this war is; and the total difference between the possession of truth and of the Spirit, learned as a certain truth, and the employment of the name of Jesus, without faith in the heart. One cannot exorcise the devil by the name of Jesus, when true faith in Jesus has no place in the heart.

The people were terrified by what had happened; but this ought not to surprise us. They felt how near they were to the power of God and to that of Satan, openly manifested. The enemy is no less dangerous when he works secretly. A single word from Jesus had been sufficient to cast out a legion of demons, no more to enter into the liberated man. But the influence of Satan persuaded the Gadarenes to beseech Jesus to depart out of their coasts, and He goes. The presence of God makes the heart tremble more when it perceives it, than that of Satan. Such is the condition of poor sinners. But Satan at bay is more to be feared than when he goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. "Resist the devil," it is said, "and he will flee from you." But we need all the armour of God to deliver from his snares.

The power of God in Paul is seen in three ways: first, the Spirit is communicated by the laying on of his hands; second, very wonderful miracles; third, the devils themselves are forced to own the power of His word, and the authority of Paul, when he makes use of the

name of Jesus; and they make a difference between him and those who under false pretences employ that name. This was soon known by all, Greeks and Jews, and they were filled with fear. It moreover works on the conscience of the believers, who come and confess their deeds, bringing the books of their curious arts, for which Ephesus was celebrated, and burning them before all to the value of fifty thousand pieces of silver. When God reveals Himself in power, the heart opens before Him, and confesses sincerely all that the conscience knows, doing so openly for His glory. This is a special effect of the manifestation of His power. Man thinks no longer of himself, or of his shame, but is overcome by the presence of God.

But we must retrace our steps a little in order to observe the progress of the apostle's own work. For three months he reasons in the synagogue. It seems that the Jews were not so badly disposed as in other cities (for example, at Thessalonica and elsewhere). They had desired that the apostle should remain there some time, when he had gone to Jerusalem. However, the greater part did not long endure the preaching of the gospel. Many became hardened, and did not believe, speaking evil of the truth and of the Christian profession before the multitude. Paul then leaves them, separates the disciples, and continues to dispute daily in the school of one Tyrannus. Two years he spends in this way, so that all who dwelt in Asia, Greeks and Jews, heard the word of the Lord Jesus.

Thus was the Christian assembly formed outside the synagogue, the Jews (as ever) being contradictory and opposing. Their attempt to make use of the name of Jesus, without faith, was likewise turned to their

dishonour. Though the goodness of God sought for them, yet their enmity against the name of Jesus, and against the grace which wounded their pride, they never lost. God then placed His blessing elsewhere. And when the Christians were separated from the Jews, and the assembly settled apart, this extraordinary power of the Spirit was manifested in Paul, as a testimony from God to his work, and to the growing assembly. Thus was this important gathering formed by divine power. For two years God held the reins, and kept the adversary in check, in order that the testimony of Christ might be firmly established in this capital of Asia, and resound in all the country round about. All had been under the direction of God. Formerly, Paul had not been permitted to go to Ephesus; but now, under the good hand of God, he labours there without hindrance—two or three weeks at Thessalonica, and two or three years at Ephesus. In the two cities the work is done according to His will. Now that the work is finished, as far as Paul is concerned at this time, he proposes to depart.

The enemy left free, and spurred on by the powerful effect of the word of God, raises a great tumult against Paul and the gospel (v. 23). But it is vain to fight against God. His fury expends itself in shouts and cries. But when God allows it, opposition manifests itself in its true character. The devil works on the passions, on selfish interests, on base motives, which rise up against the love, the grace, and the salvation which God sends to ruined men. God be praised, it was too late! It was the efficacy of His grace in liberating the slaves of a diabolical superstition, the worship of false gods, that is, of demons, which called forth all this tumult. We have

seen that till the work was finished, the enemy was kept in check.

A certain man, Demetrius, gained large sums from the manufacture of little silver shrines to Diana, because this Diana was celebrated in the entire pagan world; and her temple was one of the seven wonders of the world (v. 27). Incited by the desire for gain, he assembles the craftsmen to oppose the truth which was destroying all their trade (v. 25, 26), the truth which shewed that gods made with hands were no gods. How deep the gloom into which man, without God, and by his very need of a God, throws himself!

Not only were their gains at stake, but the importance of their goddess and of their city was in danger of being destroyed. They do not say, “Great is Diana,” but “Great is Diana of the Ephesians.” The knowledge of the true God makes our own nothingness felt, and judges the state of the heart; but in a false religion there is an alliance with the passions of the heart. The worshippers are great according to the measure of their religion, and of that which they worship. If the Diana of the Ephesians was great, the Ephesians themselves were important according to her importance. To despise Diana was to detract from the greatness of her followers. Gain and importance were the two things which accompanied the worship of this goddess. Such was the source of the passions awakened by a few clever words from Demetrius. Such is the religion of the natural heart, which however feels the need of a God. It is a false religion which does not act on the conscience, unless perhaps to produce fear, if God be against it; but which nourishes human passions, and allies itself with the malice of the heart against truth.

The multitude rise in fury, and rush with one accord to the theatre. The brethren restrain Paul, and prevent him from going there, whither his zeal would have led him. God watches over His servant; there was nothing for him to do there. The crowd, however, take possession of two brethren, companions of Paul, and drag them to the theatre. Certain chiefs of the public festivals of Asia, friends of Paul, send to him, warning him not to present himself at the theatre, where there was only violence and tumult. But once more the poor Jews prove themselves without light. Walking in darkness in their own errors, they put forward one of their countrymen to defend the doctrine of the one God. But this only still further excites the fury of the people, who cry out for the space of two hours, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians.” Without God it is impossible either to oppose the devil, or to maintain the truth; neither the truth of the one God, nor the name of Jesus associated with that of Paul who announced Him, had any power without faith and truth in the heart. The poor Jews had rejected the Saviour, and without their perceiving it, strength entirely failed them, as it did Samson, shorn of the Nazarite’s hair. Although enemies to the new doctrine, yet they expected to be able to present amicably the doctrine of the one God. But, enemies to the grace of God and despised by men, all they could do was to excite the multitude to continue still longer their senseless and passionate cry, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians.”

The town clerk, having appeased the people, gives them to understand that the authorities would most likely interfere on account of the tumult, and that the men (Gaius and Aristarchus) had done nothing contrary to

the law. He then dismisses the disorderly and irregular assembly, which had done nothing but shew what man is under the power of Satan and moved by his own selfishness.

In short, we have in this chapter, presented in a remarkable way, the conflict between the Spirit of God working in the servants of Jesus, and the power of the devil, kept in check, however, by God, as long as His work was being performed; and the sorrowful position of the Jews, all their moral power being taken from them, since they were opposed to the gospel. The assembly of God being formed beyond their limits, they were no longer His people; when they sought to make use of the name of the Lord, it turned to their confusion; when they defended the doctrine of the one God, which they believed, it only made the people cry out the more, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians.” Till the Lord comes, this conflict must continue; and though miracles have ceased, yet the care of His servants never grows weaker in the heart of Jesus. He works as really as ever, and the government of God orders everything for the good of His work. He may indeed permit Satan’s rage to break forth, but He never forgets His own.

He can allow the apostles to be driven from Thessalonica and Berea, and then keep the enemy in check at Ephesus. But He always watches over His servants. He can hold the door open where He will, and shut it where He sees fit to do so. We can rely on Him! Only let us be directed by Him who openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth. When we have “a little strength,” He sets before us an opened door.

Chapter 20.

From 2 Corinthians 1 and 4, it would appear that the persecution was more violent, and that it continued longer than during the public events recorded in Acts 19. But what these particulars may have been, we are not told. But after the stormy assemblage in the theatre, Paul calls the disciples together, embraces them, and departs into Macedonia. Going over those parts, he exhorts the brethren, and arrives in Greece. There he remains three months. He had thought of returning from Greece to Syria; but the Jews—ever envious, and enemies to the gospel, as well as to the one who preached it outside their limits, since they had rejected Christ, and hope for them was gone—laid wait for him. The truth which they had had was always the truth; but now that the Son of God had come, and the Father and His love been manifested in Him, that no longer possessed any power; for this revelation was one of life eternal, and of the satisfaction of divine justice. They could not endure the thought of being placed on one side on account of the truth they would not receive, and therefore laid wait for Paul. When this becomes known to the apostle, he returns by way of Macedonia.

Let us remark in this brief narrative, which is not accidental, that when Paul had planted the gospel in a country, he did not abandon the converts, but returns with affectionate solicitude, instructs, exhorts, edifies, and watches over the seed planted by his instrumentality, in order that it may be preserved, and grow in the knowledge of Christ. He does not neglect the Lord’s garden, well knowing that tares may spring up where the good seed grows, and that the enemy can spoil the harvest, if it is not well guarded. It is more

needful now than ever to do this, for we are in the perilous times of the last days. Though the enemy can never pluck the sheep out of the Good Shepherd's hand, yet he may disperse them; they may be subjected to the effect of every kind of evil doctrine, by which their growth is hindered, the Lord's glory trampled upon, testimony to Him destroyed, and the candlestick taken away. Let the Lord's servants take warning!

Paul then returns by Macedonia. It is not important, but in verse 4 we should read, "Gaius and Timotheus of Derbe." From verse 5 we see that many attached themselves to Paul in the work; and others, besides those in verse 4 went before. Luke, the author of this book, and perhaps others too, accompanied the apostle in his journey towards Troas. The others tarried for him at Troas. It is not without interest to see this emotion of hearts moved by the gospel which Paul preached. All were free; some, such as Apollos, labouring apart; the others, the companions of the great central figure—great for his faith in Christ, and as sent directly from Him by the voice of the Holy Ghost—occupied and sent by Paul to carry on and accomplish the work in places he would himself have visited, had he not been obliged to go elsewhere, when the opportunity presented itself for them to be thus sent.

Leaving Philippi in five days, they come to Troas, and there remain seven days. Everywhere assemblies had been formed. Here a door had been opened to Paul in coming from Ephesus, but he had not been able to remain long, being uneasy about the Corinthians, since he did not find Titus there, whom he had sent to them. It was at Troas that Luke, who wrote the Acts, had attached himself to Paul, to accompany him the first

time he visited Macedonia. We do not know how the gathering at Troas was formed; but there was one, and we are given to see into it a little, not its discipline or gifts, as in Corinthians, but its ordinary walk.

The first day of the week the disciples met together to break bread. This was evidently their custom. It was the first day of the week, and the disciples gathered themselves together according to their habit, to break bread. It was the first object of their meeting, the centre of their worship. Other things were done; they spoke, taught, as Paul did, sang; but they met together to break bread. This is confirmed by 1 Corinthians 11:20, where the apostle says that the Corinthians did not really assemble for the Lord's supper, since each ate his own supper, not thinking of the others, but eating and drinking for his own pleasure. Now this shews clearly that the object of the assembly was the Lord's supper. At the beginning they broke bread every day; Acts 2:42, 46. When gatherings were formed everywhere, and zeal had been enfeebled, they met only on the first day of the week, the day of the Lord's resurrection. This was not a rule, but Luke speaks of it as a usage well known everywhere among the Christians. It seems that Paul had awaited this day to speak to the disciples, simply because it was the day of their meeting together; however, that is not certain. However it may be, he profits by the occasion to preach to them before setting out, and he speaks till midnight. They met, it seems, in the evening.

The discourse was long, and they had not yet broken bread; the weather was hot, and there were many lights. Such is human weakness, that all this so affected a certain Eutychus, that he was overcome with sleep, as

Paul was long preaching, and fell down from the third floor, where he was sitting by the window. He was taken up by the men dead. Paul naturally interrupts his discourse, goes down and throws himself on him, declaring that life is still in him. The separation had not yet taken place; he was stunned by the fall, and if the power of God had not interposed, he would have been caught in the clutches of death. Life, however, had not yet gone out of the body; and by the Spirit, Paul so works on it, that the functions of life are restored. The bonds between soul and body are re-established. In the case of the child restored to life by Elijah (1 Kings 17:21, 22) the soul had already left the body, and returned to it. From these cases, as always elsewhere, we see that the soul is entirely distinct from the body; and though in our present state it works by means of the body, yet it is in its habitation; that life in this world is the activity of the soul by means of the functions of the body, the activity of which is restored by sleep, because we are feeble; that when the soul leaves the body, the man is definitively dead, but that the activity of the soul by the functions of the body may be interrupted, as is partly the case in sleep; and this action is re-established if the soul have not left the body, if God does so or permits it.

In its highest part—the spirit, the soul in relation to God is alas! at enmity against Him: it will not and does not submit to Him. With its inferior part, it works in the body: marvellous creation! in relations with God above, and with nature before. It is a mixture of thoughts which seek to rise to God but cannot, and of creature thoughts. It is responsible to God according to the nature it has originally received from Him. When born of God, it receives a totally new life, in which it is in relation with

God, according to grace and redemption, a life animated by the Spirit which it receives from above, and which makes of the body an instrument for the service of God. Possessing this life, we know that, “if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” I have said this in reference to Eutychus, because in these days the simplicity of the truth regarding the soul is lost sight of by many.

Paul then goes up again, and, having broken bread, talks still even till day-break, comforting much the souls he saw perhaps for the last time. He then departs leaving Eutychus alive to the joy of the brethren. Paul sends on his companions by ship, and goes himself on foot, desiring to be alone. For us this is often a wise thing; to be alone, apart from men, but alone too with God, where we can think of Him, of ourselves before Him, of the work, as He sees it, and where in His presence responsibility is felt, instead of activity before men. No doubt this activity ought to appear in His presence, because it is holy; but at all events the activity of man is another thing than to place oneself before God, such as He is for us. It is not less true that this communion with Him, as His servants, gives and sustains a blessed confidence in Him, an intimacy of soul with Him, full of goodness and of grace.

Paul had instructed his companions to take him in at Assos, which they do: from thence they proceed to Mitylene, to Chios, and finally to Miletus, half a day from Ephesus. Paul had determined not to stop there, desiring if possible to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. If he had stopped at Ephesus, he must have remained some time, as he had laboured there for a long

period, and with great blessing. He passes on therefore, sending from Miletus for the elders of the assembly at Ephesus, the centre of the work in that region. It is evident that the apostle was pre-occupied with the circumstances in which he was placed—with the apparent end of his career. This thought, it is probable, exercised an influence over him, when he went alone on foot to Assos. And also it was the cause of his long speech at Troas.

It is not only imagination which suggests this idea; the apostle expresses (at the end of the Epistle to the Romans, written when he was about to leave Corinth, Rom. 15:31) his fear that he might be an object of hatred to the rebels in Judaea; and he desires the Romans to pray that he may be delivered out of their hands, hoping thus to be able to see their face with joy, and from Rome to continue his work in Spain. We know that in Palestine he was taken, and after two years confinement at Caesarea, went a prisoner to Rome; that he remained there as such two years more; and that there, as far as the word is concerned, his history terminated. It is possible that he may have been liberated; I believe so, from what we find in the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon; Phil. 1:25, 26; Philemon 22.

From 2 Timothy too it seems that he was set free, and that he returned to Asia. But as to the Biblical record of his labours, all is finished at the end of the Acts, which leaves him a prisoner at Rome. According to God’s thoughts, such as they are communicated to us in the scriptures, that was the end of the apostle’s work. And he felt that such was the case; and it is no more a question of going to Spain, or travelling anywhere

beyond Rome. The Holy Ghost spoke of bonds and tribulations; and Paul's thought now turned towards his departure from this world.

The elders being come from Ephesus and assembled before him, Paul speaks of his ministry as of a thing accomplished. A little before he had told the Romans that he had no longer any place in those parts, his career there being over; Rom. 15:23. Revisiting the scenes of his work in Asia, and the regions of Asia Minor, he shews us the character of this work, and the effect of his departure; and this renders his discourse very important. He had served the Lord with much humility, in trials and in tears, caused by the snares of the Jews, whose opposition was continual and without conscience. In spite of it, however, he never failed both in public and in private to preach and teach all that was necessary for them, repentance towards God, and faith in Jesus Christ, as the true state of a soul brought to God. Nothing is said, as to the order of these two things in the heart, although in such order there is something practical, but of the true character of repentance and faith. Repentance was to be preached in the name of the Lord Jesus (Luke 24:47); so that His name might be owned, and that sinners might repent. It was founded on the ground of the grace and truth that came by Him; but true repentance takes place in the presence of God, and goes beyond sorrow for having done wrong, or shame, or the mere work of the natural conscience.

The soul revealed to itself through grace comes with open eyes into God's presence. All is judged according to Him whose presence is manifested to the soul; everything is judged as it appears in His eyes. The word of God is His eye in the conscience, and makes us feel

that He has seen all, and then things appear to us as they do to Him. We no longer excuse ourselves, nor do we desire to do so. The result is confession to God by a conscience which feels itself in His presence (Heb. 4:12, 13); while the heart restored desires holiness, and the soul feels its responsibility for all that we have done. We justify God in our condemnation (Luke 7:29); though in such a case there is always some confidence in His grace, not peace but confidence; for He who has become light to the soul is also love, Himself being both these things. When He reveals Himself as light in order to shew us our sins, it is in love He does so in Jesus; and He is love. He cannot reveal Himself to the soul without being the two things, for in His nature He is both.

Take the case of the woman in Luke 7. The light and the love of God had penetrated into her soul; she did not yet know what it was to be pardoned, but her heart had confidence in Jesus; and at the same time her conscience was deeply convinced of sin.

Take again the case of Peter (Luke 5:8): the prodigal son (Luke 15:17-19); and of the thief on the cross (Luke 23:41). Repentance thus is the effect of the revelation of God to the soul, which then shews itself; and up to a certain point it knows God as light, which manifests everything. “Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did.” But as love to the soul, the Lord inspires confidence, though the remission of sins be not known. This is discovered by the soul by faith in Christ Jesus—not only that Jesus is the Christ, but that by Him its sins are pardoned, for He was dead for our sins; and if we receive the word of God, we believing in Him know, that He has taken all our sins on Himself on His own body on the tree. When He had by Himself purged our sins, He

sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; because by one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified by that sacrifice.

Although faith in the work of Christ is necessary in order to possess peace, yet His person ever remains as the object of the heart—the Christ who has loved us, and given Himself for us, who now is glorified at the right hand of God, after having borne our sins, and submitted to death and the curse for us, but ever living for us now; who Himself will return to seek us, and make us perfectly like Himself in glory. We believe in Him, not only in the efficacy of His death. He is our righteousness before God, made such by God Himself, and we are accepted in the Beloved. John 17 tells us that we are loved with the same love wherewith the Father loves the Son. If true repentance is made in the presence of God, and in respect of Him, confidence and peace come by means of the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. He has made peace by His own blood.

Such was the testimony of Paul, the truth of the conscience, peace, and the knowledge of God by His Son Jesus come down here in love, ascended into heaven as man, having accomplished the work which His Father had given Him to do. So great were the truth and the revelation, and so like the apostle is the execution of his ministry! But this ministry was drawing to its close, without knowing that such was the case. The Spirit testified in every place that bonds and tribulations awaited him; and he foresees that they would see his face no more. This furnishes the opportunity to speak of the effect of His departure. The sheep of Jesus are safe in His hands; as to the life He has imparted to them, they can never perish—none can pluck them out of His

hand. But a temple had been established, a house on the earth, of which the apostle was by grace the founder according to the will of God, the wise master-builder; 1 Cor. 3:10. According to another figure, He has placed a candlestick on the earth to shine round about Himself, and this He can take away. There will always be a house of God built with His hand, and by His power which will never grow less—Christ the foundation, the stones living, by grace placed on this chief corner stone, and growing to an holy temple for the Lord; Matt. 16:18; 1 Pet. 2:4, 5; Eph. 2:21.

Against this work of the Lord—a work carried on by grace in the heart—the gates of hell cannot prevail; for it is the fruit of the power of the Lord Jesus, working in grace. Moreover, this temple is not yet entirely built—it is growing. At least we may expect that by grace every soul can be introduced into it. God alone knows the moment when the work of grace which forms the assembly, the body of Christ, shall be accomplished. See 2 Peter 3:9. But God's will has been to form an assembly on the earth. The work of Jesus, of which we have spoken, is done here below; but beyond this, as we have seen, God formed an assembly by the ministry of Paul, a temple on the earth, confiding the building of this temple into the hands of men, and under their responsibility. It is now the habitation of God through the Spirit, Jews and Gentiles being built up together, founded according to the will of God, but left to the responsibility of man. "But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon." "Now if any man build upon this foundation [Jesus Christ], gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be

revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is."

There are three kinds of workmen: a good Christian and a good workman, such as Paul; a good Christian and a bad workman, himself saved, but his work to be consumed; then he who seeks to corrupt and destroy the temple of God, whose work, as well as himself, shall perish. Such were the heresiarchs, who, moved by the enemy, sought to corrupt the faith. Three sects of them existed during Paul's own time; but as long as he remained in the world, his spiritual energy resisted and overcame evil; such as immorality among the Corinthians, and the loss of the doctrine of grace among the Galatians. But with his departure this energy disappeared. He had already said (Phil. 2:21) that all sought their own, not the things which were Jesus Christ's. No soul was to be found like that of Timothy to care for the state of the Christians.

Paul tells the elders then that, after his departure, grievous wolves should enter in among them, and that even of their own selves perverse men should arise, and draw the disciples away. Till Satan be bound, and the Lord come to do it, there will ever be conflicts. Since the beginning of the world, whenever God has established anything good, man's first act has been to destroy it. First, there was man himself; then, in the world after the flood, Noah got tipsy, and his authority was lost. Israel made the golden calf before ever Moses came down from the mountain. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire the first day after their consecration, for which cause Aaron could no more enter into the inner sanctuary with his priestly garments of glory. Solomon having loved strange women, his kingdom was divided.

So in the assembly established on the earth, soon after the apostle's departure, evil presents itself; and it is of this that the elders are forewarned.

Where were the other apostles? At Jerusalem. Peter, the apostle of the circumcision, leaves the gathering scattered by the destruction of Jerusalem. The chief of the apostles abandon to Paul the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles, to which work the Lord Himself had called him at the first, and then again expressly, by the Holy Ghost at Antioch. To the other apostles, therefore, he does not entrust his ministry. Still less does Paul imagine that there can be successors in his office. He knows nothing of successors; but he exhorts the existing elders to faithfulness and watchfulness, commending them to God, and to the word of His grace, "which," he says, "is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." Christ, ascended up on high, can still give evangelists, pastors, and teachers; and He does give them; but the office of personal apostolic care has disappeared. "After my departure," says the apostle. This is a departure without succession. It is sad, surely, yet true; and we have seen it in all that God has established among men. His grace continues, the faithful care of Christ can never fail. The Spirit has given His instructions for this time, as at the beginning, and the Lord is enough for the present condition, as He was faithful in the past. But such a thing as a succession to his apostleship is unknown to Paul when he speaks of his absence. God, and the word of His grace, are for him the refuge of God's people. They can meet together, and Christ will be in their midst; they can profit by the gifts He has granted according to His promise. The rules for our walk

are contained in the word; but the apostleship, as a personal energy watching over the organisation of the assembly, has disappeared, leaving no succession behind it.

This is a solemn truth, which must be well borne in mind. But we must never forget that Christ is always enough for the assembly; that He is faithful in His care of it, and that He can never fail in strength, in love, or in faithfulness. What we have to do is to count on Him, and that with purpose of heart. Divine power is manifested more in Elijah and Elisha than in all the prophets of Jerusalem from the time of Moses himself. The Lord gives what is needful to His people. The word of God confirms sadly, but abundantly, what Paul says here. His testimony is that not only should evil appear in the exterior constitution of the church, but that it should continue till the Lord comes in judgment. Let us consider what the word of God says.

Jude declares that it was already needful to write to them, to exhort them to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, because certain men had crept in unawares who turned the grace of our God into lasciviousness. They were corrupting the assembly from within; and what is very remarkable, he declares that these are they (that is, the class of persons) who will be among the objects of the Lord's judgment, when He comes with ten thousands of His saints. The corruption, begun during the time of the apostles, will continue till the coming of the Lord. So much for internal corruption. But this is not all. Evil unfolds itself from the other side, as we find in the Epistle of John. Some had abandoned Christianity openly. "Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even

now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us," 1 John 2:18.

Thus we see that though this apostle survived Paul for many years, and certainly watched over the assemblies, in Asia Minor at least, dwelling, as it is said, at Ephesus, it was only in order to record the fact that the last time was already come, which was shewn by the presence of these antichrists, and by the apostasy of many. If it be asked why God waits so long before executing judgment, the answer is to be found in 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." To Him a thousand years are as one day. In the time of the Jews, judgment was pronounced (Isa. 6), eight hundred years before it was executed, that is, when they had finally rejected the humbled, but also glorified Son of God.

The epoch of this ruin of the assembly on the earth is determined, namely, on the death of Paul— "After my departure." Doubtless, corruption had been rapidly growing. The mystery of iniquity was already working during the apostle's life; but his spiritual energy knew how to resist it. He being gone, however, it went on increasing without hindrance, except from the grace of God in individuals, and the chastisement by which God arrested the decline into ruin and corruption. The testimony of God, although hid under a bushel, has never yet been extinguished; and God has from time to time raised up witnesses in the midst of darkness, feeble perhaps, but true; and, at the time of the Reformation, delivered whole countries from open corruption. But we

have seen that the evil, introduced in the time of Jude, was to continue till the judgment.

This solemn and humiliating truth is confirmed by other passages. The assembly has never been restored. Not only does John say that the last time has come, but that this is marked by the presence of antichrists. Now Antichrist shall be destroyed by the coming of the Lord. Paul reveals to us that the apostasy that began to shew itself in John's time will be fully unfolded at the last time; when Antichrist himself shall be manifested, whose coming shall be after the working of Satan, and whom the Lord shall destroy when He comes in glory. The mystery of iniquity was already working, even during the apostle's life, and the progress of evil was to continue from his days till the Lord should come. Thus too, the Lord says that the tares are to grow till the harvest.

It seems to us, then, that the death of Paul is the moment from which we must count the prevalence of evil. We say "prevalence," because evil was already working, though Paul resisted it by the power of the Spirit; and because this evil was to go on increasing till Christ should come; because in the last days perilous time should come, and the form of godliness without the power of it. Then in 2 Timothy 3 we also get the word of God set forth as that which is necessary, and sufficient to render the man of God perfect, and furnished unto all good works. All this truth is powerfully confirmed by what is said in Revelation 2 and 3, where the Christian who has ears to hear is called upon to hearken, not to the church, but to what the Spirit saith unto the church; and in His words we find judgment pronounced by Jesus Christ on the state of the church.

We would add that it is one thing to submit to the discipline, or practical judgment of an assembly, regarding evil, and quite another thing to suppose, when we are called upon to judge of the state of the church by the words of Christ and of the Spirit, that the authority of the assembly is the perpetual safeguard of the faith. The universal assembly, Christianity, is corrupted and divided, and cannot, even as an instrument in the hands of God, secure the maintenance of the truth. It is submission to the word of God only that can do it.

In order to shew how far the primitive church wandered from the truth, we shall quote from a book read in the assembly, one hundred and fifty years after the death of John, cited by one of the best fathers of the primitive churches as part of the inspired scriptures, and esteemed as such by another, who was less orthodox, it is true.

The author, pretending to have received a revelation says, “A man possessed a vineyard, and commanded his servants to gather the fruits. The servant, being very faithful, did what was entrusted to him, and besides, out of devotedness to his. master, rooted all the weeds out of the vineyard. The master who was so much pleased with the servant, that he consulted his son and his friends as to what should be done for the faithful servant, and it was decided to make him heir with the son. Now the master is God, the son is the Holy Ghost, the friends are the angels, and the servant is Christ. God had sent him to establish the clergy for the support of the faithful; but He had done much more than this, and what God had not told him to do—He had taken away sins. Thus it is, according to the consultation of God with the Holy Ghost, and the angels, co-heirs with the Holy Ghost, who

is Son and Heir of God." Such is what was read in the churches, written by the brother of Pope Pius, and pretended to have been inspired by God. And this a hundred and fifty years after the birth of Christ. What is recounted in the same book of holiness is no better. What is there related as holy in the visions of Hermas, it is impossible to transcribe on these pages!

Such then is the testimony of the apostle; after his departure, evil would prevail, active both within and without. He tells them nothing of the nomination of successors to the elders, any more than he does of a successor to himself. He insists on the faithfulness of those who were there, whom the Holy Ghost had made bishops (for bishops and elders were one and only one office); and commends them to God and to the word of His grace, which was able to build them up, and give them an inheritance among them that were sanctified. In fact, no means is established in the word for the continuance of the organisation of the assembly. People are mistaken on this point. The disciples were waiting for the coming of the Lord, the Lord Himself. See the parables of the servant, Matthew 24, of the virgins and the talents. But the apostle shews that this coming might be delayed till long after the life of those then on the earth. The sleeping virgins are the very same that are revealed; the servants who received the talents those found afterwards at the coming of the Lord. Paul says, "We which are alive and remain till the coming of the Lord." They did not know when He would come, but still they waited for Him; Luke 12:36, etc. What has produced the moral ruin of the assembly is, that she has ceased to look for the Lord; but has said, "The Lord delayeth his coming," Matt. 24:49. She has taken and

beaten her fellow-servants, has eaten and drunk with the drunken. The hierarchy has been established; worldliness has invaded the assembly; and thus alliance has been made with the world.

The apostle recalls his own faithfulness, how he had been an example to the elders, labouring with his own hands, since it was more blessed to give than to receive. Then, kneeling down, he prays with them all. And they, weeping, embrace him sorrowfully, chiefly for the word that he had spoken, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship. Solemn departure, the end of the apostle's public work. He speaks of it as of a finished work, announcing that henceforward, in consequence of his absence, evil would prevail in the outward assembly of God on the earth, but assuring the faithful that God and the word of His grace would be enough to build them up, and give them an inheritance among those that were sanctified. This was certain. The power of Christ secures it; but the exterior system, Christianity, would be corrupted, having given up the expectation of the Lord's return. Paul teaches the same truth in 2 Timothy 3. John tells us that the last time has already arrived.

The patience of God continues to accomplish the work of grace; and Christ to supply the gifts necessary to the perfecting of the saints, and the building up of the assembly, although our coldness greatly hinders the Spirit. And this will be the case till the end of the gathering of the saints. Christianity has ripened in the midst of evil, as foretold by the apostles. It is evil which began in apostolic times, and which was already sufficiently mature in John's time, the last of the apostles; for he says that the last times had already

come. We trust that the cry, “Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him,” has already begun to go forth, and that many hearts will respond, and kindle their lamps. May the Lord add daily to their number!

Chapter 21.

From Miletus, Paul sets out for Jerusalem. In this journey, nothing of importance occurs till the apostle’s arrival at Tyre. There he finds disciples who tell him not to go up to Jerusalem; and this they do by the Spirit. We have already spoken a little of this. To tell him by the Spirit not to go up was more than to forewarn him that bonds and tribulation awaited him. He felt bound in spirit, and doubtless the hand of God was leading him, though it was not that free action of the Holy Ghost in his heart that had guided him in the Lord’s work. He means by the state of his soul as a victim, and by this providence, not to preach to lost souls in order to save them, but to bear testimony to the Lord in the face of death. In such a testimony he answers for himself, and therefore for the Lord; but he was not seeking souls. He does nothing hurtful, but he does not work in the power of the Holy Ghost. To him the Lord Himself was everything. That was not changed; and the circumstances in which the apostle is found during these last years of his life resemble those in which the Lord was placed at Jerusalem. But in Him we see perfection in man; in Paul the grace of God with man, but man in his imperfection was not doing that work now. He was going to Jerusalem with money from the Greeks for the poor saints who lived there—a good Christian work, but not the apostolic work of the gospel. He could not bear witness as an apostle at Jerusalem. The Lord had told

him so. Still as a prisoner he had a testimony, and the Lord was with him: and also towards those who had not otherwise heard the gospel, such as the governors and kings.

It is true that he followed afar off in the Lord's footsteps, being betrayed by the Jews, and placed by them with Gentiles to be put to death; but his true work as an apostle to the Gentiles was at an end, at least as far as we know from the word. We have seen that there is a certain difference between "they said to him by the Spirit," and "the Spirit said." If the Spirit Himself had said it, it would have been disobedience to Paul to have gone to Jerusalem: but it seems to us that it was rather a warning given by the Spirit, that he should not go there. Certainly it was much more than to say that afflictions awaited him. It was a solemn warning from the Spirit by the mouths of the brethren; and moreover he was "bound in spirit." But this warning the apostle neglects. He feels constrained to go to Jerusalem, but notwithstanding this, he is led by the providence and grace of God manifest towards him, faithful and blessed.

The Lord goes as a sheep, dumb before her shearers; and neither opens His mouth, nor replies to His accusers. Paul, however, claims Roman citizenship, and raises a tumult in the council by declaring himself a Pharisee. That he was a Roman, and also (as a Jew) a Pharisee, was true; but where was any testimony in these worldly facts? Christ was condemned solely for the witness He bore to the truth, to Himself before the Jews and before Pilate, although by the latter He was recognised as entirely innocent. Paul is betrayed by the Jews, and given over to the Gentiles as Christ was, and by them punished, though not put to death; but Christ is

condemned by His own divine perfection, by jealousy and hatred against God, manifest in goodness. But Paul is condemned by the enmity of the Jews to the Gentiles.

The apostle follows the Lord, but it is afar off. With full heart we honour the apostle so faithful, so blessed, and own the power of the Spirit in his work among the Gentiles. But to Jerusalem he went neither to seek the Gentile, nor to bear witness to the Jews. The Lord had told him, “they will not receive thy testimony.” And it is precisely when he reminds the Jews of these words of the Lord, that their fury breaks forth. But Christ was the object of the testimony: and though Paul witnessed a good confession, yet he was only the witness, honoured however, and following the Lord in the distance.

Let us follow now the sad history of the apostle’s end. At Tyre he enjoys again Christian simplicity and affection. Then he and his companions, accompanied by the brethren of Tyre, go down to the sea, and there kneeling down on the shore, join in prayer. Then taking leave of them, Paul embarks in the ship, and the others return to their homes. Blessed by his faithful labours, Paul leaves the field for ever. It is possible, and also probable that he was liberated from his captivity at Rome, and that he recommenced his work, but we have not the history of this in the Bible. Arrives at Caesarea, he leaves the vessel, and enters into the house of Philip the evangelist, whose preceding history at Samaria, together with the treasurer of Candace, we have already perused. There a prophet comes from Jerusalem, who announces once more that bonds awaited Paul there. His companions and the brethren of Caesarea then beseech him not to go up to Jerusalem; but in vain, Paul declaring that he is ready to die there for the name of the Lord Jesus. “And

when he would not be persuaded, they ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done."

Here we must draw the distinction between the apostle's service, in which he was the minister of God Himself, and guarded by the Holy Ghost, when his words were those of the Spirit conveyed by his mouth, and his individual walk when he is found in a place where he had not been sent to accomplish the work assigned to him. This distinction made, let us compare the path of the Lord with that of the apostle, and faithful as the latter was, mark the difference. The Lord, when He hears that Lazarus is sick, remains quietly for two days in the same place, and then, God's time being come, goes up to Jerusalem to do the will of His Father. The disciples, astonished, and fearing that death awaited Him there, warn Him, saying, "Goest thou thither again?" But the will of God was clear to the Lord, and therefore His path also, and He replies, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world." All is calm, all is in the light of a divine day for His heart. The Saviour is the object of testimony, perfect in Himself. The apostles, however great and faithful, were only witnesses of His perfection and His glory. In themselves, no matter how marvellously blessed, they were only men as others. Paul had to reprove Peter publicly, and to separate himself from Barnabas. Here, conducted by the hand of God, and strengthened by His grace, he is led, bound in the spirit, to pass through circumstances that put to the test his state of soul, and brought his public career to a close.

He goes up then to Jerusalem forewarned (though neglecting or resisting these various warnings of the

Spirit), accompanied by the brethren who were with him, and an old disciple, Mnason, with whom he was to lodge. Arrived at Jerusalem, the disciples receive him gladly; and here begins the history of that submission to human forms and Jewish customs which terminated in his captivity at Rome. But he does not follow these Jewish forms and ceremonies that he may thereby attract his countrymen to the gospel, but because persuaded into them by the elders and James, in order to shew that he was himself a good Jew, faithful to the law, and to Jewish customs. It was precisely this that threw him into the hands of the hostile Jews, and then into those of the Gentiles. Jesus, on the contrary, in the dignity of His perfection, sits in the temple to instruct the multitude. All classes of Jews come to prove him; but all are judged, and reduced to silence by the divine patience of the Saviour, and none dare ask Him any more questions. Then, as we have said, the Lord is condemned for the witness He bore to the truth.

When Paul arrives, the elders assemble with James, and, attached as they were to Judaism, and surrounded by Christian Jews, in order to uphold the reputation of their religion and unite Christianity to Judaism, counsel Paul to satisfy the prejudices of the believing Jews by purifying himself after their custom, and offering sacrifices in the temple, so that he might appear a good Jew to their eyes. Paul accedes to their proposal; and we encounter the strange spectacle of the apostle offering sacrifices, as though all such had not been abolished by the Lord’s death. He neither upholds nor wins the Jews who were not set free from their customs. Still God permitted him willingly to conform to these Jewish

ceremonies. Being at Jerusalem, though warned by the Spirit not to go there, what could he do?

Let us remember, if we have been cast for the Lord's name out from a place where we have been under the authority of the governing power, not to re-enter it, so that we may not again be placed in the position from which we have been freed. The relationship has been broken by the authority itself, and if we have left it by the will of God, by returning we place ourselves anew under the abandoned authority; and if this be contrary to that of the Lord Jesus, under which we came when liberated from human authority, we re-established over us the authority which had been destroyed, and thus strife begins between the authority of Christ over us, and that which we have abandoned. It is impossible to go on well thus. We were free under the authority of Christ, free to do His will; and we have returned to the authority which prohibits obedience to Christ. For example, suppose that a son or daughter has been driven from home for the Lord's name; by this act the parents have renounced their authority. If this son returns to his father's house, he places himself under paternal authority, and what c,an he do when his parents oppose the faith of Christ? He is powerless; and moreover, has so lost his liberty as to renew over himself the authority which opposes that of Christ, has given up the latter to return to that which is contrary to it.

Mark again the power of ancient habits. For us it is as clear as the light of day, that the sacrifices of the Jews are annulled, and that the precious sacrifice of Christ has abolished them entirely. But here is a multitude of Christians at Jerusalem, zealous for the law, offering sacrifices, and their elders counselling Paul to do

likewise. Let us remember that his submission to these customs put an end to the public testimony of the apostle. Still, as we follow Paul's history, let us ever bear his work in mind, all his labours, and the blessing which accompanied them. In this submission to Jewish ceremonies, he was not guided by the Spirit; he followed the advice of the elders; they were tenacious of the law; and his position was theirs. Paul does what they desire; and joining himself to four other men who had a vow goes with them to the temple to signify the days of purification, when a sacrifice should be offered for each of them.

But before the end of the days, certain Jews of Asia recognise Paul, and stir up the people against him, crying out that he taught everywhere against the law of Moses, and that he had profaned the temple. The doors are shut, and the crowd begin to abuse and beat Paul. While they are thus engaged, the Roman captain learns that all the city is in an uproar, and comes to liberate Paul from their hands. Such is the result of the attempt to conform to the superstitions of others, not made with a view to winning souls by guarding against offending them, but in order to convince these superstitious Jews that he walked as they did, thus only confirming them in their darkness!

If here we think of the Lord ever perfect, we shall perceive the difference of His path. Paul is taken by the hands of the Jewish rabble; Christ, when the band arrives, gives Himself up voluntarily, saying, "Whom seek ye? I have told you that I am he; if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." It is not in any way to disparage the Lord's blessed workman, unequalled in his labours, caught up into the third heavens, that I point

out this difference, but only that we may realise the unique perfection of the Saviour, the witness in His ministry of divine perfection in man, always, no doubt, but especially during His last sojourn at Jerusalem, when this perfection was proved to the end, then only shining more brightly, and found wanting in nothing.

Chapter 22.

The captain permitting Paul to speak to the people, the apostle relates the story of his conversion, then that which brings to light his submission to the superstitions of the Jewish Christians. This was the result of personal amiability, grace, and condescension to his brethren, but not of the direction and power of the Holy Ghost. His position was a false one; and in a false position it is impossible to do well. Though the grace of God may support, and sustain those so placed, yet the Holy Ghost cannot act in free power by their means. It is in sovereignty that He acts, and the instrument is like blind Samson, the power exercised being the end of his own career, as well as that of his enemies.

What is seen clearly in Paul is the absence of this power The Lord’s grace was always there. Thus, what he did ii the temple was the effect of the counsels of the elders, not o t the direction of the Spirit.

Captured now by the captain, he is allowed to speak to the people. As Paul addresses them in their own language, they listen in silence, while he relates the story of his conversion, of the revelation he had had of the glory of Christ, as well as that given to Ananias, a devout Jew. The moment he reaches the cardinal point of his discourse, however, the fury of the audience breaks out with a violence which the presence of the captain

and soldiers cannot check. “I send thee far hence unto the Gentiles. And they lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth.” It was precisely what the Lord had said to him, “They will not receive thy testimony concerning Me.” What then was he doing at Jerusalem? The word that had sent him away from Jerusalem on his glorious mission is fulfilled when he re-enters it, to the ruin of his work, making him once more a Jew, bound by the law.

Like Jesus, Paul is condemned on account of the truth of his mission; but in the apostle’s case, in a position that contradicted the mission itself. But the Jews complete their sin by rejecting, and giving up to the Gentiles, the grace offered to them. The word that raised the tumult was also the occasion of his imprisonment among the Romans. This was the proof, that as an apostle he had nothing to do at Jerusalem. He loved his people, and that deeply; for he had returned to Jerusalem, in spite of all that had been said to him. Desiring to bear witness there, he had reasoned with the Lord; but the Lord had replied that he ought not to go there. He excuses himself to the Jews, without doubt; but if they would not receive his testimony, what was the necessity of saying that the Lord had sent him? This discourse is the main point of the apostle’s history, on which all the rest depends.

Paul justifies himself before the Jews, declaring how like themselves, he had persecuted the Christians even unto death, and that they and the high priest were witnesses of it. Then he relates how all had been changed by the appearing of the Lord in glory, who had declared Himself as Jesus, and shewn him how, in persecuting the Christians, he was persecuting the Lord Himself; and

lastly the part that Ananias, the devout Jew, had taken in the affair. All this they tolerate, but when the apostle speaks of a mission to the Gentiles, their wrath breaks forth. They complete their sin. “Forbidding us,” had said the apostle, “to speak to the Gentiles—to fill up their sins already; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost,” 1 Thess. 2:16.

There are three degrees in their sin. First, they crucified the Lord of glory, and were guilty of the ten thousand talents (Matt. 18); but Christ intercedes for them on the cross, and the Holy Ghost responds to this prayer by the mouth of Peter (chap. 3), declaring that if they repented of their sin, Jesus would return. But they stopped the mouth of Peter, and then stoned Stephen who bore testimony to the glory of the Son of man at the right hand of God. This was the second degree; they would not believe in a glorified Saviour, when the Spirit bore witness to Him.

All this happened among the Jews. But Paul had a mission among the Gentiles, since the Jews would not have the grace offered to them. They would have been willing enough to enjoy the promises made to Israel, although they had rejected Him in whom all the promises were fulfilled; but of having compassion on His servant, they did not even think. It was the end; all was finished; the debt of the ten thousand talents weighed down on them. Jerusalem would neither have grace itself, nor leave it to others. Judgment will come upon it. The patience of God, long-suffering patience, at length came to its end for hearts that refused to surrender to the perfect grace of God. But the judgment of God is only pronounced at Rome (Acts 28); a judgment already announced eight hundred years previously (Isaiah 6).

But in the patience of God, this was not executed till they opposed themselves openly to His grace.

But judgment had to be executed. Christ in humiliation worked by the power of God; then Christ having been glorified, the Holy Ghost was sent into the world. Paul was afterwards raised up to carry the gospel to the Gentiles; and all having been rejected, nothing remained but judgment. The mystery of the union of Jews and Gentiles in one body was promulgated by Paul, and was the true point of progress of his testimony. It was grace itself that was rejected. God permitted the journey of Paul to Jerusalem, so that all might come to an end. Grace ever continues, even during the period of his captivity at Rome; and the mystery itself is fully unfolded by him in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians: and then he has given us the true Christian character, the practical fall of the system (Phil. 2:21), and the superiority of faith to all the circumstances in the Epistle to the Philippians. In 2 Timothy, the walk of the faithful Christian amid a scene of ruin, is clearly taught.

It will be worth our while to notice a few particularities in the apostle's discourse. The Lord still calls Himself Jesus of Nazareth. We know that He was glorified, but this makes Him shine with a light more brilliant than that of the sun. He is ever the same benign and gentle Man who learned human sorrows in the midst of men. He thinks of others, and considers all Christians as part of Himself. "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." Infinitely precious truth! Then we find in Paul the same liberty as we have seen in Ananias. He reasons with the Lord (v. 18-21), saying that more than any other he was fit for testimony at Jerusalem. And this

makes his sincerity evident. Yet in this he might perceive the Lord's wisdom, for he is bearing witness against his own presence at Jerusalem. And here too we see what a perfect conscience is, by grace and by the blood of Christ. He recounts to Christ all his sins, and the hatred which at the beginning had been in his heart to the Lord's name; how he had persecuted the members of Christ, and taken part in the death of Stephen; and all this he presents to the Lord as a motive for his mission to the Jews. But his conscience was pure now.

I believe we have spoken of a little difficulty which Paul's words present here, but I shall not err in repeating it. The companions of Paul saw the light, but did not hear the voice of Him who spoke with him. In chapter 9 we read that they heard the voice, but saw no one. They did not see the Lord, nor did they hear His words, but they saw a great light, and heard a voice without being able to distinguish the words. This is just what was necessary. They were undeniable witnesses that the vision was true and real, but the communication was for Paul alone. Only he saw the Lord (Acts 22:14, 15). For he had to be taught by Him, and bear testimony as an ocular witness that he had seen Him.

Moved by the violence of the multitude, the captain desires that Paul should be led into the castle, and commands him to be examined by scourging, but, already covered with stripes, Paul takes advantage of his rights as a Roman citizen. It was not lawful to bind such. He is not scourged therefore. On the morrow, loosed from his bands, he is brought before the Jewish Council, that they might know of what he was accused. And now Paul, who a little before had represented himself as a Jew in order to escape the prejudices of the Judaizing

Christians, declares himself a Roman citizen in order to avoid unjust punishment from the Gentiles. It was not a sin, for he was really a Roman; but where was the power of the Spirit? Where is the Christian who would not do likewise?

Chapter 23.

Brought before the Council, the apostle begins by declaring his innocence. “And the high priest, Ananias, commanded them that stood by to smite him on the mouth.” This undoubtedly was violence; yet produced not by testimony borne to Christ, but by self-justification. Paul replies with an insult, calling the high priest a “whited wall.” He had merited this, it is true; but such an answer did not display the meekness of Christ. Being reproved, Paul owns his fault; but his defence tells us of the absence of the power and of the knowledge of the Holy Ghost. “I knew not,” is not what the Holy Ghost would say. All is true; but we do not find the energy of the Spirit of God. Moreover, he is not now merely a Jew and a Roman, but also a Pharisee. Such a title he counts no longer dross and dung, it has become once more a gain.

However, God makes use of this to liberate Paul from the hands of the Jews. Full of zeal for their opinions, and of wrath against one another, the Council begin to dispute; and the discussion becoming warm, the captain fearing Paul might be pulled in pieces amid the tumult, commands the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them. In the hands now of the Gentiles, he is taken by the soldiers to the castle; there we find the perfect grace of the Lord towards his faithful servant, in bringing him through trying circumstances

without the consciousness that he was suffering for the testimony of God. For Jerusalem all was finished; and the Lord, knowing that Paul must go to Rome, appears to him the night following, saying, “Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.” What grace! He encourages His servant. It is possible that his position was not the effect of the action of the Spirit; nevertheless, even had he not drawn down the hatred of the Jews on himself, he would have been in peril.

The cross, and grace towards the Gentiles, had made him the object of the enmity of this people. He had confessed Christ glorified, as revealed on his way to Damascus, and declared his mission to carry the name of Christ the Saviour to the Gentiles. The Lord does not remind him of the faults he had committed, but of his faithfulness. He encourages him, and makes him understand (and this was the more necessary, since he was a prisoner, and might say, “I have failed, I have not hearkened to the warning of the Spirit”)— makes him understand, I say, that whatever might happen, he was under His hand and His care. Watched over in Jerusalem, he would arrive in safety at Rome, and there be permitted to bear witness to Him. What consolation for the heart of His poor servant! And what grace on the Lord’s part! The apostle might have said to himself, “Now my testimony is over, and I myself am the cause of it. Ah! why did I not follow the counsel of the Spirit? The end of my work is come, and I have done it!” But the Lord manifests Himself. Paul is in His hands, and Jesus owns him still as a witness to His name. And shall we not recognise him whom the Lord owned? Assuredly. It is possible that the spiritual power of the witness is not

displayed; it is possible that such a warning ought to have stayed his steps, and made him ask the Lord what he should do; but still the hand and heart of the Lord were with him. The grace is the more remarkable, as such a position had deprived him of the power of the Spirit of God.

The hatred of the Jews only hastened the liberation of Paul from their hands. Many conspiring for his death, the captain sends him to Caesarea, the residence of the governor. God has everything at His disposal. Here, therefore, for the first time we learn that the apostle had a nephew and a sister. Though he knew no longer anyone after the flesh, yet God knew his danger, and made use of the natural affection of a relation. Paul concerns himself little either about the young man or the peril he was in, but sends him to the captain, and the conspiracy is frustrated.

But amid the circumstances in which he was placed—though the lowest in his history—how grand the figure of Paul appears! if we compare him with those by whom he was surrounded— priests dominated by base passions, without conscience and without heart, and seeking only their own importance. In the captain, bound to subdue the passions of a people whom he despised, we see, in his sending Paul to the governor, a worldliness full of duplicity and contempt for the rights of others. Such, alas! are everywhere the ordinary, though base feelings of poor mortals. In Paul, though oppressed, and occupying a false position, integrity and grandeur of soul shine out; from a soul sustained by the great things with which he had been in relation; from the thought of a glorified Lord, and of a mission from Him for the salvation of poor sinners. Such things his

persecutors could not understand (which shews that his position was a false one), but which issued naturally from a heart filled with them. But all he does is to throw what was holy to dogs, and pearls before swine. Nevertheless these things enlarge and illuminate the apostle's figure in the scene we delineate, where, though scorned and trampled upon, he stands out in relief from among all the great ones, for the beauty and grandeur of his moral figure.

We now find the apostle in the hands of the Gentiles; and though there may have been no free action of the Spirit in Paul himself, yet the providence of God cares for him, ordering everything for the testimony he was to bear; and His favour is with him. The implacable enmity of the Jews only produces the fulfilment of the counsels of God, and debases them in the eyes of all who possess a noble heart. Though their desire was to gain possession of his person, yet he was to remain no longer in their power, and he is therefore conducted to Lysias, to Felix, to Festus, to Agrippa, and at last to Caesar. Such was the intention of God. Such too the means employed by Him to present the gospel to the governors and to the great; not by raising up, as many frequently think, men of the world to do so; but God makes a prisoner His servant, in order that the gospel might be carried to the knowledge of governors and kings. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence," 1 Cor. I:27-29.

Paul then, under a guard, journeys by night (for the captain was distrustful of the Jews), with a letter representing matters in a light favourable to himself, introducing him as a Roman, and preparing a good reception for him by the governor.

Chapter 24.

Instead of abandoning their inimical endeavours, the Jews go down to Caesarea to accuse Paul. The accusation is what our narrative itself suggests—his acts among the Jews in countries beyond Palestine, and his profanation of the temple. For confirmation of their allegation, they refer to the captain. The dignity of Paul's reply is self-evident. While speaking with the respect due to the governor, he does so with perfect independence, with simplicity, and with a good conscience, as one innocent. His faith as, a Christian—which the Jews called heresy—and particularly his belief in resurrection, it is not requisite to confess. Formally denying what they accuse him of, he demands that his adversaries prove what they say. The only thing of which they could accuse him, was of having spoken of the resurrection in such a way as to raise a tumult in the council, and this they were little disposed to bring to light. Their violence on that occasion had obliged the captain to rescue Paul out of their hands. Felix, accustomed to Jewish habits, and knowing that the dispute arose out of the doctrine of Christianity, which had by that time acquired publicity, defers his judgment till Lysias should descend from Jerusalem to Caesarea. Meanwhile, Paul is set at liberty, and his friends are permitted to minister to him.

Some days later, Felix, who seems to have been absent with his wife Drusilla, a Jewess, calls for Paul, to hear him concerning the faith in Christ: for now the new doctrine had spread everywhere, and was attracting the attention of all. Felix, as well as his wife, being well versed in the things of the Jews, desired to know from its original source what Christianity was; and therefore summon Paul for this purpose. But Paul, ever occupied with souls and Christ, speaks to the conscience of the governor, telling him of judgment to come. Felix then, trembling, remands the apostle till “a more convenient season.” Thus divine testimony is borne to the council, Lysias, and to the governor. Besides this, the governor hoped that Paul would give him money to be liberated. But to such dealing Paul does not consent, and therefore remains a prisoner. Felix, having to go away, and desiring to leave a favourable impression on the minds of the Jews, leaves Paul bound. Though aware of his innocence, and able to set him free, he cared nothing for justice. Money and public opinion were of more importance to him. God’s intention, however, was that Paul should appear before other governors and kings, and at last before the Emperor himself. And this therefore is what happened.

Chapter 25.

Festus, the new governor, after three days goes up to Jerusalem. There the chief of the Jews inform him against Paul, and propose to have him brought to Jerusalem, intending to kill him on the way. But Festus will not consent, saying that he would return soon to Csesarea, and that then they could go there and accuse him.

Here again, God, in His providence, watches over His servant. Arrived at Caesarea, Festus makes Paul appear before him, and in order to gratify the Jews who accuse him, proposes to him to go up to Jerusalem. This he had before refused to the Jews; but now, in order to gain popularity, he proposes it. These two years had neither lessened the hatred, nor awakened the consciences of the Jews; and in the Roman (Festus), only base motives existed—love of self and of his own importance.

Paul upholds his integrity, and is watched over by God. He denies once more the things his accusers could not prove. Festus thinks nothing of justice, but only of gratifying the people. Paul replies with great dignity, that Festus was well aware that he had done nothing amiss, that he had not the right to give him up to his enemies, and concludes by appealing to Caesar. Such was the fulfilment of God's purpose, that, conducted to Rome by His providence, Paul should there bear witness before the Emperor himself. This was not the thought of Festus, nor of the Jews, nor yet the testimony of the Spirit in Paul. But the will of God is accomplished without that of men.

We have seen that Paul was both a Roman and a Pharisee. With him it is no longer the weak things, the base things, and the things which are despised, the things that are not, that bring to nought the things that are. All is no longer dross and dung. Paul now makes use of these things to avoid injustice and death; and God employs them to conduct the apostle to Rome there to be a witness of the truth before the great of the world. Such too the cause of his audience with Agrippa, and of his journey to Rome. Having appealed to Caesar, he

must of necessity be sent to Caesar; and Festus therefore decides accordingly.

But while these things are happening, the king Agrippa and Bernice come to salute the new governor. The latter relates to them the history of Paul, giving himself (as we find everywhere in the world, as well as in this instance) a character for equity and fidelity to the principles of justice and honour. But the story of the resurrection was only a Jewish superstition. Agrippa, one of the Herods, and king of the southern part of Palestine, was by race an Edomite, but a Jew by profession. He was consequently well-informed as to the religious questions of the country; and curious to know clearly, and from a reliable source, what the Christianity might be that had produced such a movement of spirit in the people of his country, asks to hear Paul. Festus, well knowing that the accused was not guilty of anything, and anxious to obtain some pretext for sending him to Caesar, accedes to his request. Of Paul's innocence we have the testimony of the governor, in his address to Agrippa, as well as of the others who listened to him. He did not know what to write to the Emperor, and so brings Paul before this audience in the hope of discovering something to say.

Chapter 26.

Paul now shews that it is on account of the promises made to the fathers that he stands charged, and this too was the ground of the Jews' accusation. "Why should it be thought an incredible thing with you that God should raise the dead?" He had thought that he should do many things against the name of Jesus, and zealous like the other Jews against the Christians, had persecuted them

unmercifully, even into strange cities. Then he relates the appearing of the Lord Jesus on the way to Damascus, whither he was going to imprison Christians—how he had been arrested by the glory of the Lord in heaven, and learned that it was He Himself he was persecuting, since all Christians were one with Him. It was then that the unity of believers with Jesus was for the first time declared, a truth more fully unfolded afterwards by means of the apostle.

But the conversion itself was effected by two things; first, the heavenly glory of the Man, Jesus Christ the Lord; Paul, seeing this first, and then learning that it was Jesus; and secondly, that all Christians were united in one body with Him. Paul was persecuting Jesus Himself. But thenceforward he was to be a witness both of the things he had seen, and of those in which He who had been revealed to him would yet appear unto him. He had been separated from his own people, the Jews, and from the Gentiles, to whom now he was to be sent. He was no longer a Jew, but yet had not become a Gentile. He was associated with the Lord of glory, and was sent out from Him as a witness of His glory, and of the grace that could take up an open enemy, and make him the expression and witness of the perfect grace that had converted and saved him. His mission, as God's workman, was to open the eyes of the Gentiles, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified — the whole by faith in Jesus. "By faith that is in me" (v. 18), applies more particularly to forgiveness and inheritance, though as a matter of fact, the words extend to the entire sentence. Obedient to the heavenly

vision, he had preached repentance everywhere, beginning with the Jews, exhorting them to turn to God, and do works meet foi repentance. Though the Jews had sought to kill him, yet by the help of God he had continued till that day, saying none other things than those which the prophets had said should happen—that Christ should suffer, rise from the dead, and shew light to the people and to the Gentiles.

To Festus, all this was mere fanaticism. But Paul replied with perfect dignity and propriety, in a way which was the best proof that he was not beside himself, but that he spoke the words of truth and soberness. Such a testimony, however, to an unconverted Gentile, whose conscience had not been reached, was nothing but pure madness. At all events, Festus felt that these things were entirely beyond his knowledge. He saw that Paul could not be charged with any misdemeanour. He understood nothing about the matter. The formal politeness he had at first shewn now disappears, as well as the propriety of his position. The power of what Paul had said has sufficed to reduce him to his natural state of soul. But Paul maintaining both dignity and propriety, places Festus anew in the position of governor, and addresses himself to Agrippa, who knew the truth of these things, and before whom therefore he could speak freely. Turning towards the latter, then, he asks, “King Agrippa,” appealing to his conscience, “believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.”

Being above all circumstances, Paul is completely master of the occasion. Agrippa is confused by the apostle’s question, since he was a Jew by profession, though nothing in heart! and ashamed of being placed in a corner before such company by his simple but

powerful words, tries to parry the blow, and says jestingly, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” But Paul, whose large heart is occupied only with the reality and happiness of Christianity, replies, “I would to God that not only thou, but all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am except these bonds.” Such was the beautiful expression of a heart full of grace, and therefore of love for others, and of the consciousness of a happiness that two years’ captivity had rather strengthened than weakened. But how highly by bis nearness to God, is he, the poor prisoner, the despised Jew, elevated above both governors and kings! He treats them with deference and respect, as was his duty, but because he was able to do so from his place of moral superiority to them, which he had by faith in a glorified Saviour. Humble, and at peace, when the opportunity presented itself, he could display the greatness of what was in his soul, and utter desires for the great who only possessed outward splendour.

For the pagan Festus, who only relished human grandeur, he was nothing but a madman; for Agrippa, nothing but a trouble and vexation of spirit. He had desired to know what this Christianity that was attracting the attention of all around him, and that pretended to come from God and demand the submission of all with His authority, might be; but he did not expect himself to be challenged so personally. For Paul the prisoner, it was eternal life and the presence of God who had saved him, and the earnest of the glory to which he was heir. His testimony had been given.

The effect on king Agrippa is evident. Not that he was converted—far from that—but his conscience was touched. He speaks to Festus as a little king to a

governor, not as feeling lightly, nor despising the truth and Christianity, but is careful to declare that Paul might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed to Caesar. Two things are thus made manifest; the innocence of Paul, since Agrippa fully understood the truth of his case, and that his appeal to Caesar was the only hindrance to his liberation. It was the will of God that he should go to Rome, but if he had not made use of his worldly rights to regain his liberty, he might have gone there free. Yet the hand of God was in all this, for the one who had given his decision in the matter had listened to the testimony through this appeal to Caesar; and from his knowledge of the ways of the country, was able to declare with confidence, that it was only the appeal that prevented him from being set free. It is manifest in what light the apostle's faith considered the effect of his captivity; Phil. 1:12, 13, 19. Moreover, the Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and to Philemon, are the precious fruit of his captivity at Rome. But his mission to the Gentiles, as far as the Spirit speaks of it, is now at an end. Yet, though his mission is over, the apostle remains a bright and blessed object. We shall find the condemnation of the Jews closing our history.

Chapter 27.

It having been decided that Paul should be sent to Italy, he is consigned with other prisoners to the charge of one Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band. They set out with the intention of sailing along the coast of Asia.

Aristarchus accompanies the apostle. He had already been with Paul in former journeys. We have met him at Ephesus (Acts 19), with Gaius, who at Corinth was the

apostle's host. Julius treats Paul courteously at Sidon, giving him liberty to visit his friends. God cared for his servant, and granted him leniency on the part of this officer. Besides, the authorities were well aware that he was not guilty of anything. They were obliged to send him to Rome in consequence of his appeal to Caesar.

They continue their voyage then, though slowly, the wind being contrary, till they reach a place called "the fair havens," in the island of Crete, and near the city of Lasea. It was already the month of November, and the navigation dangerous; and the port belied its name, being much exposed to the wind. The port and ruins of Lasea are still discoverable. Human wisdom advised departure, the master of the ship hoping, with a favourable wind, to reach Phenice, a better port, and there winter. This place has also been recognised in modern times. Of the two winds which prevail in that latitude, the one is soft but capricious, and the other very violent.

Here again we discover the apostle's nearness to God, his intimacy with Him, and the Lord's abundant grace towards His servant; and through this communion, Paul becomes master of the situation. On the authority of God, he is able to forewarn the sailors and captain of the vessel what is to happen. But this revelation was expressed in general terms, and the centurion placed more confidence in the owner and pilot than in what Paul said. To him, this was a mere human prediction. And when the south wind blew softly, they thought they had gained their desire of reaching Phenice. But God holds the winds in the hollow of His hand. The soft and favourable wind that tempted them to set sail, did not continue; and soon a tempestuous wind, called Euro-

clydon, which blows from Greece, and even more from the east, sprang up, and drove them towards the south-west, threatening to cast them on the quicksands of Africa, which lay almost in the direction in which the wind was driving them. After much difficulty, they succeeded in getting the boat on board, but this after all, proved useless in saving them. God was not willing that the many souls in the vessel should be saved by human means, but that Paul's word should be accomplished, and he himself be the occasion of the safety of all.

It is useless to enter into the details of the voyage. Everything possible was done to save the ship, but in vain. The description given us is perfectly exact, and even technical. Carried by the tempest, they are cast on the island of Malta. But what is important for us is the position which the apostle occupies. All hope of escape was gone. But now God interposes, and by means of a revelation made to Paul, revives the failing courage of the sufferers. The apostle reminds them of what he had said at the "fair havens," telling them that they ought to have followed his advice, and that now they were reaping the fruit of refusing it, and trusting to the knowledge of the sailors. But they were to be of good cheer, for there would be no loss of life, but only of the ship. As before governors, Paul, the servant of God, held morally the superior position, so now he occupies the same place, amid perils sufficient to reduce the crew of the ship to despair. God was watching over Paul. It was necessary that he should appear before Caesar; and full of grace, the Lord had given him all those who were with him.

The ship being driven by the force of the wind near to the land, the sailors cast four anchors out of the stern. Then, as all are looking anxiously for day, the crew, thinking only of themselves, endeavour to escape in the boat, under pretext of getting out an anchor from the forward end of the vessel. But Paul is there, observes all, and directs everything on the part, one may say, of God. It was necessary that he should save them. Paul had now acquired full influence over those in authority. The presence of God, and the divine knowledge he had received of what was to happen, had gained for him the confidence of all. Cutting therefore the ropes of the boat, the soldiers let her drop off. Their salvation was to depend on God, and this had to be owned. If any could have been saved by human means, all might. But all would have perished if the sailors had not remained on board. All the work had to be performed by God.

If we follow the counsels of God through His word, we shall avoid many mistakes. He can save us still when we err, but it will be through suffering and loss. Israel refused to ascend the hill of the Amorites, and had therefore to remain thirty-eighty years in the desert. Here, Paul's companions would not listen to his words, which were those of God, and they lost everything, except life. Their deliverance, it is evident, came from God alone, and was effected for the honour of His servant, whose words they had despised. It is always important for us to ascertain the will of God before entering any untried path. If we are assured of this, the difficulties will be only difficulties; and the help of God is enough to overcome them. But if we are not sure about His will, then doubt and weakness arise in the heart,

because faith to count on God for help is not there, since we are not certain that the path is according to His will.

Paul then comforts them, and persuades them to eat, for the storm had prevented them from taking any regular meal for fourteen days. On the authority of God, he assures them that not a hair of their heads shall perish. He then gives thanks, and eats himself, in order to encourage them. Then all take heart, and eat also. Sufficiently refreshed (for they eat with the more courage, being cheered by that of the one who walked with God, and with whom was His secret), they begin to lighten the ship by throwing the grain overboard. It was not wrong to do so. God can take up the means and the intelligence of men and use them; but these means did not do much good; the hand of God did everything. The ship is then run aground at a place where two seas met, and while the fore part remains fast the stern is broken by the violence of the waves.

But God is faithful to His promise. The soldiers desire to kill the prisoners, so that none may escape; but the centurion, moved by all that had happened, and guided by God, wishes to save Paul, and therefore does not permit them to do so. According to his command, those who can swim cast themselves into the sea, while the others reach the shore on pieces of the ship. God paid this tribute of honour to His servant. He who governs the winds and seas, brings all through the tempest, though through their own fault, in order to manifest the apostle’s nearness to Himself, and saves all, as Paul had foretold, who therefore shines here as elsewhere, for the power of his faith, and the simplicity of his confidence in God. The wisdom of man went for nothing in the deliverance of the crew and the others. All had to resign

themselves to God for salvation; and they were saved. All power to avail of this necessity was frustrated by the word of Paul.

Chapter 28.

God honours His servant on the island where he and his companions had been cast. He works miracles, and receives no hurt from the viper which fastens itself to his hand. Paul had brought captivity on himself by his appeal to Caesar, but still God was with him. It was necessary that he should bear witness before Caesar. God made use of his journey to Jerusalem (where, it is true, the power of the Spirit was not manifested in Paul) in order to bring him before Caesar himself; and this could not otherwise have been accomplished. Far from abandoning him, He displays His grace and power to him most fully.

I have already mentioned that his public testimony, as far as we learn from the Bible, was now at an end. The last testimony to the Jews had been given, and their judgment sealed; but the Lord's grace does not fail now; He comforts and sustains His servant in every circumstance in which he is placed. The weakness of man is found, it is true, even in Paul; but also the grace and the wisdom of God. It is remarkable that the church of the city of Rome was not founded by any apostle. Before Paul's arrival, there were already Christians in Rome; and the gospel in its apostolic power came in captivity.

The voyage is continued without incident of importance. Brethren, however, are found at Puteoli, and here the apostle remains for seven days. From thence, he goes on to Rome. The brethren there must have heard that Paul

was coming, as they come out to meet him. He was probably left at PutecU, while the centurion made known his arrival in Italy to the authorities. The rumour of this would then reach the brethren. But here we meet once more with the apostle's experiences. The love of the brethren contrains them to go to meet him. Paul, seeing them, thanks God, and takes courage. He was then cast down—I do not say discouraged—but he needed to take courage. Here we find a difference in the experimental state of Christians, which it is important to remark. On the one side, there is the state of the soul in itself, and on the other, its strength in the presence of difficulties and the power of the enemy, and in the labour required for the gospel in a world the prince of which is the devil; although these two things react on each other. Though we may have a deep sense of feebleness, and be filled with perplexity, yet, if we walk with God, if confidence in His faithfulness and His goodness do not fail us in the work, and before our enemies we lose sight of self, then the power of God will work in us, and act against that of the enemy, and amid the unbelievers among whom we labour.

Thus it happened to Moses. Leaving Pharaoh's court, he went down among the people of God in slavery. Faithful and blessed, he was owned by God in what he did; but he carried human power with him; and when he had killed the Egyptian, he fled for fear of the king's anger. Forty years in the desert dissipated this human confidence, though lack of faith in God was mingled with the sense of weakness. He was not eloquent, he said, not fit to appear before Pharaoh. But when sent from God, he presented himself before the king, it was neither in false fleshly energy, nor in the sense of weakness. The

power of God was there; and as we read, he represented God to Pharaoh, overcame all obstacles, and dehvered the people from his oppression.

Paul himself, when called to labour amid a rich and corrupted populace, said, “And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling,” 1 Cor. 2:3. Feeling the difficulties and the power of the evil, he threw himself on the aid of God, and the work was accomplished in demonstration of the Spirit and in power. It is in human weakness that the Lord’s strength works, and is made perfect. How the Lord, perfect in everything, went through all the sufferings of His heart with His Father in Gethsemane, before drinking the cup! He did not then drink the cup, nor make propitiation for our sins: but as man, He contemplated all that lay before Him. The power of Satan was there to hinder Him from persevering till the end in the path of obedience. His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; but He told all to His Father; and when the enemies came, was as calm as in the days of His service. Here our wisdom is to present all to God, in the conflicts that may be before, as in our service. Then He will be with us when the work is over. Though our weakness may be sensible to us, yet the power of God will be with us. Paul, full of this when with others, and in the most difficult circumstances, feels the painfulness of his own situation, and is encouraged by the presence and love of the brethren.

Paul goes then to Rome, where the centurion places him, with the other prisoners, in the hands of the captain of the guard. But the apostle is under the care of, and guarded by the hand of God. He is allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him. The conduct of the Jews had not alienated the apostle’s noble heart (I

say noble, because he was a chosen vessel; compare Matt. 25:15) from his people, the people of God. He sends and calls for them; but only that they may hear for the last time their condemnation foretold. Still, some believe. Here we find the end of the ways of God towards Israel, and that of the labours of Paul, the prisoner at Rome. The threatenings of God, prophesied by the mouth of Isaiah, eight hundred years before (Isaiah 6) are now accomplished. His long-suffering, the gift of His Son, the many warnings of the prophets, all had been in vain. And though judgment had been deferred for a time through the intercession of Christ on the cross, yet they were not more willing to recognise Christ glorified, than in humiliation. It was mercy that prolonged the testimony of grace, sending it even to countries at a distance from Jerusalem, among those of the dispersion, after Jerusalem had rejected the divine blessing. But no effect was produced on these; and judgment fell on the unbelieving nation, till the sovereign grace of God shall call them to enter into the privileges of the new covenant, and the Lord Jesus shall come, bringing the better blessing of pure grace. But the history of Israel in its responsibility is over, as well as that of the gospel in its free power. God has never ceased to preserve a testimony on the earth; and has given power and fruit according to the good pleasure of His will; His name be praised! But the work of liberty and apostolic energy is over.

The gospel is captive at Rome! But the providence of God watches over the truth, maintains testimony, and does not allow it to be entirely hidden. There have been evil times, in which iniquity and superstition have prevailed, and truth has been persecuted; and others in

which God has held the door open, and given full liberty. Often, however, faith and steadfastness shine more brightly in evil days that in times of peace and tranquillity. Elijah, who was caught up to heaven without dying, is not found in the reign of Solomon; and when he himself could find none faithful in Israel, God maintained and guarded His seven thousand in the midst of the unbelieving and apostate people.

Though it pleased God to allow Paul to remain a prisoner, yet He held the door open for souls. For two whole years he dwelt in his own hired house, preaching the kingdom of God, and the things of Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

Such is the touching end of the public career of the apostle of the Gentiles, faithful above all, large of heart, able by grace to understand the wonderful counsels of God as a grand whole, and to feel their perfection and their greatness; and equally capable of entering into the circumstances and relationships of a fugitive slave with his master, with an affection and a delicacy without example. Bound to the Lord with a heart that led him to suffer all for Him, and for souls dear to Him; bold even to fearlessness; tender and affectionate as a mother for her babes; energetic and patient, he suffered all things for the elect's sake, that they might obtain salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. As truly risen with Christ, he knew no man after the flesh, being separated from both Jews and Gentiles, and united to a glorified Christ, his strength and hope, his all in all.

If he possessed a fault—he was a man, and displayed his manhood fully—it was in loving too much the ancient people of God, his brethren after the flesh. For this fault

he was made prisoner, but the ways of God were carried out according to His wisdom. If we would know the effect of his confinement, at least of his being made prisoner, let us read the beginning of the Epistle to the Philippians 1:12 to 20. It is beautiful to see the faith and courage of the apostle after two years imprisonment. He might have reproached himself, and said, “Ah, if you had not gone to Jerusalem, if you had not appealed to Caesar, you might still have been preaching everywhere, have gone to Spain,” etc. But such was the will of God; and He was with him in his trouble. Submitting to this will, he rises above circumstances, renders thanks to God for all, finds that His wisdom is better than liberty, and works where God has placed him. Faith and confidence through grace raise him above his position to be with God, to act on His part, in whose presence he dwells.

We ought to be thankful to God, we and the church, for ever, for the fruit of this period, in which the apostle was free from constant labour. The epistles to the Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, were written at this time. Two are profound dissertations on the privileges of Christians and of the assembly. Another is the expression of the experience of a godly soul led entirely by the Holy Ghost. Then the fourth is the outflow of the apostle’s personal affection for a soul he has won to the Lord and to eternal life—a poor slave, it is true; but he says, a son whom he has begotten in his bonds. Generally speaking, they are letters in which the highest truths of Christianity are unfolded, and in which we learn what is not to be found elsewhere in the New Testament —at least, not fully taught, though the truths themselves are spoken of, but only in part, and

introduced by the way. These scriptures complete the circle of the revelation of God.

The career of the apostle Paul was more remarkable than that of any other. His fellow apostles accomplished the work of the Lord within the narrow limits of Judaism. The starting-point for him was the Lord in glory, and that all Christians were recognised as being one with Him. “Why persecutest thou me?” the Lord had asked him. This glorified Lord, salvation, and the kingdom that was to come, he preached to every creature under heaven. Then, for the completion of the word of God, he unfolded and taught what the church was. He developed the truth as to her position, the union of believers with Christ, the presence of the Spirit in believers and in the church, establishing them as the temple of God on earth. The revelation of the church, or assembly, put an end to Judaism, since there were no longer either Jews or Gentiles, but Christians united in one body to Christ. Paul was thus the head, as servant of Christ, and founder of a new economy; and he also presented himself as a model whom converts were to imitate in their walk and ways.

No other apostle held such a position. The twelve followed Jesus Christ while He was in the world; but this Paul did not do. Then they saw Him taken up to heaven, and believed that He was glorified at the right hand of God. Paul, till then an enemy to Christ, but converted through sovereign grace, while acting in the violence of his enmity, began with the vision of the Lord in glory, who had made Himself known to him as Jesus of Nazareth. What he preached, he called his gospel, the gospel of the Lord’s glory. The knowledge and revelation of the counsels of God were confided to him; and he was

caught up to the third heaven, and there heard unspeakable things which it was not lawful for a man to utter. His apostleship was to the Gentiles, to the whole world; and to this he was called by the Lord in glory, and sent expressly by the Holy Ghost. He began with the Jews, the people beloved of God, the possessors of the promises; but, according to the prophecy of Isaiah 49, he turned towards the Gentiles, when the former rejected the testimony of God. Of the church, as the body of Christ on earth, and habitation of God through the Spirit, no apostle except Paul speaks. See Col. 1:23-29.

In the apostle's character, we find both good and bad features which stamp him a man as we are. None of these things were seen in Christ, entirely and alone perfect in every respect. But as a man of like passions to ours, Paul, the servant of Jesus Christ, had no equal. Although in captivity at Rome, the word of God was not bound. God watched over it, and Paul, dwelling in his own hired house, received all who sought after truth, and taught them with perfect liberty the gospel so dear to him. In all times, God has made it public, more or less, in order to give life through faith; but its history, begun by the marvellous power of the Holy Ghost at Jerusalem, terminated at Rome, where, in the person of Paul, to whom it had been entrusted, it lay a prisoner. Judaism crucified the Lord, and imprisoned the gospel of the glory, but God, in spite of the efforts of Satan, disseminates it, especially in these times—His name be praised! In respect to the church, it remained bound till the present day. But though preachers have little strength, yet the Lord holds the door open, and no man can shut it.

[End Of Expository—Vol. 4.]

11 In chapter 22:4, the reading should be: “and Gaius and Timotheus of Derbe.” Gaius was not of Derbe. The difference is only in the punctuation.

12 Then it was the name of a province of the Roman Empire.

13 Feeing counsel.