Lectures on Galatians

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Galatians 1

I trust to be enabled to show, in looking at the Epistle to the Galatians, that this portion of the word of God is formed with the same skill (as, indeed, a revelation of God must be) which we have found occasion to remark in other books of the Old and New Testaments; that it is stamped with the same evidence of divine design; and that, having a special object, the Holy Ghost subordinates all the details to the great thought and task that He has in hand.

Now, it is plain, from a very cursory glance, that the object of the epistle was not so much the assertion of the truth of justification by faith in contrast with works of law, as the vindicating it against the efforts of the enemy who would merge it under ordinances and human authority; in other words, it is the antidote to the Judaizing poison of many who professed the name of the Lord.

In Romans, it is more the bringing out of positive truth; in Galatians, the recovery of the truth after it had been taught and received, the enemy seeking to swamp it by bringing in the law as the conjoint means of justification. The Holy Ghost sets Himself, by the Apostle Paul, thoroughly to nullify all this force of Satan; and this gives a peculiar tone to the epistle.

As usual, the first few verses bear the stamp of the whole, and show what the Holy Ghost was about to bring out in every part. We have, of course, the choicest collection of words, and the avoiding of irrelevant topics,

so as to reveal in short compass the mind of God as to the state of things among the churches in Galatia. This accounts for the comparative coldness of the tone of the epistle — the reserve, we may say, with which the apostle speaks to them. I think it is unexampled in any other part of the New Testament. And the reason was this: the bad state into which the Galatians had fallen did not so much arise from ignorance, as it was unfaithfulness. And there is a great difference. God is most patient towards mere want of light; but He is intolerant of His saints' trifling with the light He has given them. The apostle was imbued with the mind of God, and has given it to us in a written form without the slightest admixture of human error. He has given us, not only the mind, but the feelings of God. Now man reserves his bitter censure for that which is immoral — for a man guilty of cheating or intoxication, or any other grossness: every correct person would feel these things. But the very same persons who are alive to the moral scandal may be dead to an evil that is a thousand times worse in the sight of God. Most people are sure to feel immorality, partly because it affects themselves; whereas in what touches the Lord, they always need to be exhorted strenuously and to have the light of God brought to bear strongly upon it. Satan is not apt to serve up naked and bare error, but generally garnishes it with more or less of truth, attractive to the mind. Thus he entices persons to refuse what is good, and choose what is evil.

We learn from God how we ought to feel about evil doctrine. Take the epistle to the Galatians, as compared with the Corinthians, in proof of what I am asserting. There you would have seen, if you wont into a meeting

at Corinth, a number of people, very proud of their gifts. They were fleshly, making a display of the power with which the Spirit of God had endorsed them. For one may have a real gift of God used in a very carnal manner. At Corinth there was also a great deal that was openly scandalous. In the early christian times it was usual to have what is called a love-feast, which was really a social meal, or supper, when men had done their work, or before it, and they could come together. At Corinth, if not elsewhere, they united this meal of love along with the supper of the Lord. And one can understand that they might easily get excited: for we must remember that those believers had only just emerged from the depravities and darkness of heathenism. Drunkenness was most common among the heathen: they even made it a point of honour to get intoxicated in honour of their gods. These Corinthian saints must not be judged of by the light that persons afterwards received; and indeed it is in great measure through the slips of the early believers, that we have learnt what christian morality is or ought to be. They were like babes coming out of the nursery, and their steps were feeble and faltering. There were, too often, ebullitions of nature that showed themselves among them like the heathen. There were, besides, parties among the saints. Some were ranging themselves under one banner, and some under another. They had their different favourites that they followed. Some had even fallen into most flagrant evil, and others again were standing up for their rights, and going to law one with another. There was looseness of every kind in their wall. All these things came out in their midst. There was a low moral order of things. Had we not the writing of an apostle to such as these, we might have considered that it was impossible for them to be

Christians at all. Whereas, though there is the most holy tone and condemnation of their sin throughout the epistle, yet the apostle begins in a manner that is more and more striking, the more you think of it and bear in mind the state of the Corinthian believers. He begins by telling them that they were sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called as saints. He speaks to them, too, of God's faithfulness, by whom they were "called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." What a contrast with the natural impulse of our minds! We might have been disposed to doubt that any, save a very few of them, could have been converted.

Now, why is it that to the disorderly Corinthians there were such strong expressions of affection, and none to the Galatians? Writing to the former, he calls them the church of God. "Paul, called an apostle of Jesus Christ.... unto the church of God that is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints.... I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God that is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge.... so that ye come behind in no gift: waiting for the coming [revelation] of our Lord Jesus Christ," etc. And then he begins to touch upon what was wrong, and continues it throughout. Writing to the Galatians, on the contrary, he says, "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead,) and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ." Not a word about their being in Christ or in God the Father! Not a word about their being saints in Christ Jesus and faithful brethren. He

just simply says the very least that it is possible to say about Christians collectively here below. He speaks of them as “the churches of Galatia:” he does not associate them with any others, but they are put, so to speak, as naughty by themselves. On the other hand, the apostle takes care, to say, “All the brethren that are with me unto the churches of Galatia.” If he does not speak of the saints in general, he does universally of the brethren then with him, his companions in service, whom he joins with himself in writing to the Galatians. He had a reason for this. He was not along in his testimony, whatever the false teachers might insinuate. All the brethren that were with him identified themselves, as it were, with his present communication.

Looking at the manner in which he speaks of himself, shore is something very notable in it. “Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead,” etc. He begins controversy at once. The very first words are a blow at the root of their Jewish notions. They found fault with the apostle because he was not with the Lord Jesus, when He was upon earth. What does Paul reply? He says, I accept that which you mean as a reproach; I am not an apostle of men nor by man. He completely excludes all human appointment or recognition in any way. His apostleship was not of men as its source, nor by man as a medium in any way. Nothing could have been more easy than for God to have converted the Apostle Paul in Jerusalem: it was there he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel; it was there that his first violence against the Christians broke out. But when God met him, he was away from Jerusalem, carrying on his hot persecution of the saints: and there, outside Damascus,

in broad daylight, the Lord from heaven, unseen by others, reveals Himself to the astonished Saul of Tarsus. He was called not only a saint, but an apostle; “an apostle not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.” And to make it the more striking, when he was baptized, whom did the Lord choose to make the instrument of his baptism? A disciple who is only this once brought before us as a godly old man, residing at Damascus. God took special care to show that the apostle, appointed to a signally important place, the most momentous function of any man that ever was called to serve the Lord Jesus Christ in the gospel — that St. Paul was thus called without the intervention, authorization, or recognition of man in any shape or form. His baptism had nothing to do with his being an apostle. Every one is baptized as a Christian, not as an apostle. He immediately goes into Arabia, he preaches the gospel, and God at once owns him as Christ’s minister in the gospel, without any human interference. Such, indeed, is the true principle of ministry, fully illustrated in the call and work of Saul of Tarsus, henceforth the bondman of Jesus.

It may be objected, however, by some that we do read of human setting apart and laying on of hands in the New Testament. We own it fully. But in some cases, it is a person who has already shown qualification for the work, set apart in a formal manner by apostolic authority to a local charge, and clothed with a certain dignity in the eyes of the saints, perhaps because there was not much gift. For the elder, it will be observed, is not said to be “a teacher,” but simply “apt to teach.” External office is not so needed where there is power in a high degree. Power makes itself felt. Saints of God will

always, in the long run, be obliged to own it. Hence, when a man has received a gift from the Lord, he ought to be the least anxious about it for his own sake: God knows how to make it respected, if men fail to see or hear. But when there are men who have grave and godly qualities without power evident to all, they need to be invested with authority, if they are to have weight with unspiritual people. Therefore, it seems, we read of an apostle, or an apostolic delegate, going round and taking the lead in governing, appointing, advising, where there was anything amiss or lacking among the saints.

The fact is, people confound eldership with ministry. Elders were appointed by those who themselves had a higher authority direct from Christ; but there never was such a thing as ordaining a man to preach the gospel. In Scripture, the Lord, and the Lord only, calls men to preach. There is not, in the entire New Testament, one instance to the contrary. It is positively disorderly, and contrary to the word of God, for a man to seek a human commission in order to preach the gospel, or for taking the place of a teacher in relation to the Christian assemblies. In apostolic days there never was such a thing as a person appointed a teacher any more than a prophet. But among the elders there might be, some of them, evangelists, teachers, etc. Therefore, it is said, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.” The presbyters, or elders, whose business it was to role, even if they were not teachers, were in danger of being despised. But they were to be counted worthy of double honour, if they ruled well. They were to be honoured as a class, and specially they who laboured

in the word and doctrine. Several of them, besides being elders, might be also teachers, and such would have superadded claims on the esteem of the saints. There is no wish to set aside the fact, that there were persons set apart by man; but what I deny is, that such was the case in the ordinary classes of ministry — pastors, teachers, etc., etc. These were never appointed by man in any shape whatever. The whole body of scriptural ministers is entirely independent of ordination. The assembly's choice entered in the case of deacons, who looked after external things: they were appointed by apostolic sanction — at least, such was the practice in setting the seven men over the business of the tables in Jerusalem. So, too, the stewards of the bounty of the Gentile assemblies, spoken of in 2 Corinthians 8:19, 23. They were chosen to the work by the various churches whose contributions were entrusted to them. The elders were called rather to take the lead and govern locally, though it is nowhere intimated that they were elected of the assembly. Nevertheless, they were formally chosen by apostles or apostolic delegates; and the weight of those who chose them was no doubt intended to give them a just importance in the minds of the saints generally.

The case of Timothy is, no doubt, peculiar. He was designated by prophecy to a certain very peculiar work — that of guarding doctrine. And the apostle and the presbyters laid their hands upon him, by which a spiritual gift was communicated to him which he did not possess before. It is evident that there is no man now living who has been similarly endowed and called to such a work.

It may be said that, in the case of the Apostle Paul, there was the putting on of hands, which we have in Acts 13.

What does this show? Not, certainly, that he was an apostle chosen by man; for the Holy Ghost declares here that he was “an apostle, not of men, neither by man.” That which took place at Antioch was in no sense ordaining him to be an apostle. It is evident from many scriptures that, for several years before hands were laid on him, he had been preaching, and was one of the recognized prophets and teachers at Antioch. (Ver. 1.) I believe that the point then was the setting him and Barnabas apart for the special mission on which they were just about to go out — to plant the gospel in new countries. Assuredly, when the Holy Ghost said, “Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them,” it does not mean, that hitherto either one or the other had been preaching of their own will, without the Lord’s authority, and still less that the great apostle of the Gentiles was now constituted such by his inferiors. It was, then, purely and simply a recommendation to the grace of God, for the new work on which they were about to enter. Some such thing might be done at the present day. Supposing a man, who had already been preaching the gospel in England, felt it much laid on his heart to go and visit the United States of America, and his brethren felt that he was just the man for that work, they might, in order to show their concurrence and sympathy, meet together, with prayer and fasting, to lay their hands upon the brother who was going thither. This, in my opinion, would be quite scriptural. It is what has been done in such cases. But it is not ordaining. It is merely the recommendation to the grace of God of persons already gifted for the work, who have some new path marked out for them.

But what I believe to be unscriptural, and indeed positively sinful, is the insisting on a certain ceremony through which a man must pass before he is recognized as properly a minister of Christ. This, general as it may be, is traditional imposture, without one shred of Scripture to cover itself. It is merely something that man has brought in, chiefly founded upon the Jewish priesthood. If one belonged to the priestly family, before he could enter upon his priestly functions, he had to go through a number of ceremonies. These the Roman Catholics, above all, imitate in their measure. But the astonishing thing is, that men, who in words denounce popery, have continued to imitate one of the worst parts of it; for it is in this very thing that I believe the Holy Ghost is most grieved. The effect is this, that it accredits a number of men who are not ministers of Christ, and discredits a number of men who are His ministers, because they do not go through that particular innovation. It has the effect of doing all the mischief and hindering all the good that is possible. This is an evil which, derived from the core of Judaism, is the greatest conceivable check to the energy of the Holy Ghost in the Church at the present or any other time. Some may look grave at this remark, and say it is not charitable so to speak; but such persons do not know what charity means. They confound it with indifference. And indifference is the death of charity. If you saw your child with its hands over the burning coals, you would not be hindered from the most earnest cry, or any other energetic means to rescue it, by people telling you that a loud voice or a sharp snatch were wrong things for a Christian. So, as to this very subject, there is that which is bound up with the blessing of the Church on the one hand, and the curse of Christendom on the other. How

many horrors come out of it? The pope himself is a product of it: because if you have got priests, you naturally want a high priest; if you have the sons of Aaron, you need Aaron also represented. The pope was set up on this very ground, and the whole system of popery depends upon it. Alas! it is a demon which Protestantism has failed to exorcise.

“Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by men,” entirely excludes man, as being either the source of his ministry, or the medium in any way connected with it. The great thing that we have to remember with regard to ministry is, that its spring is in the hands of Christ; as he says here, “by Jesus Christ.” He does not say of Jesus Christ. I regard “by Jesus Christ,” in this particular connection, as much stronger, for this reason — that the Judaizing teachers would have said, We fully allow it to be of Jesus Christ, but it must be by those who were chosen and appointed by the Lord Himself when He was upon earth; the apostles must be the channel. God was striking a death-blow at the notion of apostolic succession. He was most graciously shutting out, for every spiritual man, any pretence of this evil thing. The Galatians were probably troubled and perplexed that, avowedly, Paul should be an apostle entirely apart from the other twelve. Why did they not all cast lots about Paul, if he was to be one of the apostles in the highest sense? This is what he is meeting here. He connects his apostleship not only with God and our Lord as its source, tent also as the medium — “by Jesus Christ, and by God the Father who raised him from the dead.” Here there is another blow at the successionists. They had been drawing a contrast between Paul and the other twelve apostles, to the disadvantage of the former. But the

apostle shows that if there was any difference between himself and them, it was that he was an apostle by Him who raised Christ from the dead. The others were only called when our Lord was here upon earth, taking His place as a man here below. Paul was called by Jesus Christ risen from the dead. There was greater power, greater glory, greater distinction, as far as any existed, in the case of Paul's calling to be an apostle, than in that of any of the others. The apostle puts all their theories to the rout, and brings in his own special place with great force. Paul is the pattern of ministers to this very moment. In speaking about ministry, he loves to put it upon this ground, the ground upon which he was called himself. When it is a question of his preaching, he says, (2 Cor. 4) "We believe, and therefore speak." He takes it up upon the simplest and the best basis — if a man knows the truth, let him speak of it. There was no need of waiting for anything. It is to that the Lord works in the Church. Hence, in speaking about ministerial gift in Ephesians, where we have it in the highest possible forms, on what does he found it? On Christ ascended up on high, and giving gifts unto men: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." The whole of ministry, from its highest functions to its lowest, is put upon the same principle. If it be urged, It is all well what you have been saying about Paul, but it does not apply to ordinary ministers, I reply that it does; because the Holy Ghost teaches us through the Apostle Paul, that when you

come down from apostles and prophets, to pastors, teachers, or evangelists, they are all set upon the very same basis; all are gifts from the same Lord, without the intervention of man in any shape or degree.

But, then, it will be said by some, What about elders? There you are wrong: you have not got them. I answer, We have not elders formally, because we have not, and are not, apostles. It is plain that in this we are not worse off, to say the least, than any of the so-called churches or sects; because I am not aware that any have apostles. So that the true difference between those who meet round the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and others, is, that we do not pretend to have what we have not got, whereas they do who pretend to appoint. You cannot have appointed elders without apostles; yet we may have certain persons that possess the qualifications of elders, and such ought to be owned; but to imitate the appointment of presbyters, now that apostles no longer exist, is sinful. This may suffice for the subject of ministry.

And what were the Galatians about now? What were they bringing the law on Christians for? If the Lord had already given Himself for our sins, and settled that question, to suppose that He should have given Himself for our sins, and yet the sins not be blotted out, is to deny the efficacy of His work, if not the glory of His person. He is showing them the very elementary truth of the gospel, that Christ gave Himself for our sins. So that it is not at all a question of man seeking to acquire a certain righteousness, but of Christ who gave Himself for our sins when we had nothing but sins. And this is not for the purpose of putting people, under the law again, and making that to be their proper standard as

Christians, but He “gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world.” What is the effect of men taking up the law as Christians? It makes them worldly. There is no exception. There cannot be such a thing as a man separate from the world, when he is under the law. We are not in the flesh, but in spirit. That is the standard of a believer: not of some particular believers, but of all. We are “not in the flesh.” There is that which is of the flesh in us, but we are not in the flesh. The meaning of the apostle there is, that we are no longer looked upon nor dealt with by God as mere mortal men with our sins upon us; but we are regarded by God according to Christ, in whom there is no sin: and if we look at our standing as Christians, there is none in us; for our nature has been already condemned in the cross, and God does not mean to pass sentence upon it twice. What we have now to do is to live upon Christ, to enter into the blessedness of that truth — He “gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world.” The law spoke to citizens of the world. Christ gave Himself for our sins, that He might redeem us or take us out of the world, even while we are in it. “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” We are regarded as separated from the world by the death of Christ, and sent into it by His resurrection; but sent into it as not of it, yea, not so much of it as an angel. The death of Christ puts us completely outside the, world. The resurrection of Christ sends us into it again as new creatures, messengers of the peace He gives, entirely apart from what is going on in the world. Our Lord says, “Now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world as thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the

world." He puts the same measure for both; and therefore, when He rose from the dead, He says, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

The apostle puts himself with them before Christ, "who gave himself for our sins." It is the common blessing of all believers, "that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." The remarkable thing is, that when God reveals Himself as the Giver of a law — as Jehovah — He does not undertake to separate men from the world. The Jews could not be said to be separate from the world. They were separate from the Gentiles, but they were the most important people in the world; and they were made so for the purpose of maintaining the rights of God in the world. They were not called to be outside the world, but as a people in the world. Therefore the Jews had to fight the Canaanites; and hence, too, they had a grand temple. Because they were a worldly people, they had a worldly sanctuary. But this is altogether wrong for Christians, because Christ "has given himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." When God brings out His will, no longer merely His law, but revealing Himself as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has been given to die for our sins, there comes out a totally different state of things. We enter into the relationship of conscious children with God our Father: and our business now is to honour Christ according to the position that He has taken at the right hand of God. People forget that Christ gave Himself for our sins in order to deliver us from this present evil world. They sink down into the world, out of which redemption ought to have delivered them; and

this is because they put themselves under the law. If I have to do with the will of God my Father, my privilege is to suffer as Christ suffered. The law puts a sword in man's hands; whereas the will of God makes a saint to be willing to go to the stake, or to suffer by the sword for Christ's sake: as it is said, "For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us:" but it is by suffering, not by what the world glories in. God is glorifying Christ after the pattern of the cross, and this is our pattern; not Israel, nor the law; but the cross of Christ. And now He says, as it were, I have got Christ in heaven: 1 am occupied with the only One who has ever glorified Me, and that is the One you are to be occupied with.

Nothing can be more exact and full, nor more thoroughly calculated to meet those dangers of the present day, which take the form of reviving succession and religious ordinances as a means of honouring God. Scripture meets every case; and a remedy is given for it in the blessed word of God. Our wisdom is to seek to use it all, to be simple concerning evil, and wise unto that which is good.

There is a remarkable abruptness in the way the. apostle enters at once into his subject. He had just alluded to our Lord's giving Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world; and this had drawn out a brief thanksgiving unto "God, to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen." But now he turns at once to the great object that he had in hand. His heart was too full of it, so to speak, to spend more words than need required. There was that which was so fatal even to the

foundations on which the Church, or rather individual Christians, must stand before God, that he could not linger. “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel.” “So soon removed” seems to me to be a somewhat stronger expression than what the Spirit of God makes use of. It means, in process of removing. They were shifting and being changed “from him that had called them into the grace of Christ.” The evil and danger were not yet so settled a thing but that he could still look up to God about them. When we think that it was the Apostle Paul that had evangelized these souls, and that the time was short since he had preached to them, I do not know a more melancholy proof of the ease with which Satan contrives to lead astray. Take children of God that have been ever so well instructed, and yet one sees the symptoms, which hardly ever fail to show themselves, of inclination to that which is weak and wrong, a readiness to follow human feelings in the things of God, diverted from the truth by appearance, where there is no reality. These things you will find, unless there be extraordinary power of the Holy Ghost to counteract the workings of Satan. The rubbish which may enter with the foundation, of which the apostle speaks in 1 Corinthians 3 — the “wood, hay, and stubble” — all this shows us how it may come to pass that although God it was who had formed the Church, yet there is another side of the Church to take into account, and that is man. St. Paul speaks of himself as a wise master-builder. In one point of view it is God who builds the Church; and in this there is no failure. What the Lord has taken in hand immediately, He maintains infallibly by His own power. But human responsibility enters into this great work, as it does into almost

everything, save creation and redemption, where God alone can be. But elsewhere, no matter how blessed, whether the calling in of souls to the gospel, or the leading them on after they have known the Lord, or the corporate gathering of the children of God into one — the Church, man has his part in it; and he too surely brings in the weakness of his nature. The history God gives us in the Bible is that, whatever He has entrusted into the hands of man, there he is weak and fails. “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.” Now this is, after all, but the history, not only of the Old Testament, and of the various ways in which God had tried man; but even where you have the far more blessed subject of the New Testament, (what God is in His Son and in His ways with men by His Son, since the Lord went up to heaven and the Holy Ghost was sent down,) even in respect of these things, we have man’s weakness surely showing itself. And it is not merely that unbelieving men have managed to creep into the Church; but the. children of God have got flesh in them too. They have their human feelings and infirmities, and that which Satan can find in every Christian whereby to hinder or obscure the power of God. It was by this means that the Galatian saints were led astray, and that all are in danger of it, at any moment. I gather two important lessons from this. The first is, not to be surprised if there be departure in the saints of God. I must not allow myself for a moment to think that it shows the slightest weakness in the truth itself or in the testimony committed to us, or that it puts a slur upon what is of God; for God may be suffering what is contrary to His own nature and permitting for a time that man should show what he is. But as surely as there

is that which is according to God, He will vindicate Himself in it, and allow what is not of Him to prove its true character. But another thing we learn is the call for watchfulness and self-judgment. To these Galatians, who once were so earnest, who would have plucked out their eyes in their love for Paul, that very apostle has now to write, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ.” Observe the choice of expression — “the grace of Christ.” Because what Satan was using was the mixture of the law with grace, of legalism and Christ. The characteristic of their call had been simply and solely “the grace of Christ.”

God had made known to the Galatians that they were poor sinners of the Gentiles, that there was nothing for them but mercy, and that mercy had come to them in the person of Christ. And if this is the one thing that He invites souls to — to receive the mercy that He is giving them in Christ, it supposes that they feel their need of mercy, and are willing to look to Christ and none other. But still it remains true that it was alone the grace of Christ which had acted upon these Galatian believers; and of this he reminds them. What were they removing to now? A different gospel, which is not another. In our English version it is a sort of paradox — “another gospel, which is not another.” But in the language in which the Holy Ghost wrote, there was sufficient copiousness to admit of another shade of language. “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto a different gospel, which is not another.” So that if the grace of Christ was the spring and power of their calling, the gospel was the means of it. But now they had left this for something different. Observe, it does not say, contrary to it, but a

different one: and for that very reason he says, it is not another. It is unworthy to be called another gospel. God owns but one. He permits no compromise about the gospel; neither ought we.

It may appear strange and perhaps strong to some; but I am thoroughly convinced that the same Galatian evil that was active then is at work now universally in Christendom. It may take a somewhat different form in one place from another; but wherever you turn, wherever you have either the word spoken on or the profession of Christ maintained in the way of Christian institutions, you will find the mingling of the law in one form or another along with the grace of Christ. It does not matter what people are called, it is the same thing in all. There are differences of degree. Some are more open, some more intelligent, some more systematic about it; but the same poison, here diluted, and there concentrated, is found everywhere; so much so that the truth on this subject sounds strange in the ears of men. As a proof of this, I take one simple expression that will come before us in the various epistles of St. Paul, the misapprehension that prevails as to “the righteousness of God.” One may rejoice to know of persons preaching Christ, or even the law; because God uses the preaching of the law to convince many a sinner. Yet we are not to suppose, because God works even where there is a perverted gospel preached, that the children of God ought to make light of error. It is one thing to acknowledge that God works sovereignly, but it is another when the question for us is what is His true testimony. There we are bound in conscience never to allow anything except the simple and full truth of God for our own souls. One ought never to listen to anything

short of that, and truth can avoid hearing error. I am not speaking now of mistakes that may be in preaching. A slip or ignorance is not a perversion of the gospel. It is one thing to listen to what may be a mere mistake; but to go where one knows beforehand that the law is mingled with Christ, is sin.

People may say, This is unjustifiably strong language. But am I going to set myself up to judge the Holy Ghost? For we must remember that what the apostle wrote was not as a private man, but that which the Holy Ghost wrote for our instruction. And what he tells us is this: “There be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ; but though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which I have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” Let a fair person weigh such a word as this, and then judge whether any language of mine can too strongly insist upon the duty of a christian man in reference to a perverted testimony of the gospel. For this is what was coming in among the Galatians.

Perhaps you will tell me that it was more — that, there, it was the mingling of the ceremonial law with grace, whereas now the moral law is held up. I can only say that this is worse still, and more deadly, because the ceremonial law may be represented as typical of Christ; but the moral law brings in one’s own doing in some form or other; whereas the only meaning of any of the Jewish forms and ceremonies is invariably as connected with Christ. If I look at the christian institutions now, I say there is no virtue in the water of baptism or in the bread and wine, save in what they represent. The foundation is gone if anything is brought in to justify a man except Christ, who ought to be dearer to me than

all other things — dearer even than these means. To care for Christ is the very best evidence of a saved soul. But I do not admit that there is a lively care for Christ, where a soul knows His will in anything, and does not make it of the very first importance. When saints of God have learnt the truth with simplicity, and are enabled to hold it firmly, a time of trial comes. Perhaps there is a great deal of weakness and unfaithfulness among those that hold the truth; and persons say, I do not see that those who hold this truth are so much better than their neighbours; but there is this difference between the weakness of people's conduct who hold the truth and those who do not — that it can be remedied, while there is no turning falsehood into truth. All the power on earth could not root out legalism from the state of things in Christendom. The religious systems that are established must cease to be earthly systems if they give up the law. You cannot reform that of which the foundation is totally unsound. The superstructure can be removed, but if the foundation is worthless and false, it never can he remedied. There is one right course, and that is to quit it altogether. I say that those who see these things, owe it to our Lord and Master — owe it to the truth and to the saints of God — to show an uncompromising separation from all that destroys the full truth of this grace of Christ. We may bear with individuals who may not know better.

On the other hand, if you see a person very worldly in a religious body, I think it is an unworthy thing to fasten upon individuals, and take up such an abuse as a hunting or an intoning priest. We have much better employment than making remarks upon dancing clergymen. Such a thing may be worth the world's

notice. But it is very different where falsehood is preached. There we ought to seek to deliver every child of God from the evil influence. How painful to think some are bound to preach the law, so bound that it would be a dishonest thing if they did not! God gives, not a help merely, but a deliverance from this static of things. If we believe the word of God, if we believe what the Holy Ghost says about it in the most solemn manner, we ought to have done with it altogether. There may be very good men concerned who are fettered; but we speak of the danger of mingling the law with the gospel, and that is the Galatian evil.

Let us consider what is the warning of the Holy Ghost to the souls that were being ensnared by it. People may tell you, that they know how to separate the good from the bad; but God is wiser than men, and a spiritual man would discern a going back of soul where such things are allowed. This accounts for the extraordinary strength of the apostle's warning. They were his own children in the faith; and as to those who perverted and troubled them! he stood in doubt of them What he says is — no matter who it may be — "If he preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. Yea, if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." They might have taken refuge in this: no doubt it was what Paul preached, but we have additional truth, beside what Paul gives. But he says, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." It is not only what I preached, but what you received. It is not only that there should be no mixture with what he preached, but no addition to what they had

received. We have what the Apostle Paul wrote as clearly as they had what he preached. There is no difference, except that what is written is even of greater authority, instrumentally, than what was spoken. In the latter, too, that which is of nature might come in. The apostle had to confess on certain occasions that he had spoken hastily; never that he had so written. It was not a question of taking away the gospel, but of adding what was of the law to the gospel.

“For do I now persuade men or God?” That is, was he wishing to gain them over or God? “Or do I seek to please men? for if I yet please men, I should not be the servant of Christ.” He was perfectly aware that this kind of uncompromising testimony rendered him particularly obnoxious to men, and even produced ill-will among real saints of God. So now the same thing would be called want of charity. In fact, it is not want of charity to speak uncompromisingly; but it is to judge those who do. He says it is the way not to please men but to please God. It was in that very way that Christ had called him to be a servant. “I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” There was something, no doubt, extraordinary in the manner in which the Apostle Paul had had the gospel made known to him. He was not converted by the preaching of the gospel, as most are. Peter’s case was a similar one. Flesh and blood had not revealed it to him, but the Father which was in heaven. Peter was the first person who was taught the glory of the Christ — taught that glory, not as connected merely with Jewish prophecies, but the deeper glory of Christ, as Christians ought to know Him now, as the Son of the

living God; not connected with earth exclusively. Peter was the first to whom the Holy Ghost revealed the grand truth that Jesus was not only the Messiah, but the on of God in a heavenly and divine sense. Peter, therefore, was honoured by God, and put by our Lord in a very special place. He was the one to whom our Lord first named His Church. In the case of St. Paul, the truth went farther. For if we have the Father revealing the Son to Peter, Paul goes yet beyond, and says that God revealed His Son in him. Peter could have said, It pleased the Father to have revealed the Son to him; Paul could say, in him. St. Paul was led of the Holy Ghost into a gradually increasing knowledge of the grand and most glorious truth of the oneness of the believer with Christ. But this is not brought out here. Yet the expression, “revealed his Son in me,” is one that could hardly have been used by one who did not know this truth. As in Hebrews, the apostle speaks about believers having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, though the epistle to the Hebrews does not reveal that we are members of Christ’s body; yet we could not be exhorted to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, unless we were members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones; so only Paul could have said, “It pleased God to reveal his Son in me.” It is connected with the truth of which Paul was the chosen witness — the union of Christ and the Church, intimated at his very conversion. “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” He was persecuting the saints; and the Lord says, To persecute them is to persecute Me. They were one. The Church and the Lord are united. We are not members of Christ’s divinity, but of His body. It is only as man that He has a body. But while He was a man upon earth, we were not members. The corn of wheat, unless it died, must abide alone; “but

if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit:" that is, it is founded upon the death and resurrection of Christ, that He is able to associate others with Himself as the members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Christ in heaven and the saints on earth make one body. That is what Paul learnt at his conversion. Having the substance of this in view, the apostle says, "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man."

And just allow me to state another word or two in connection with the gospel of St. Paul. He is the only one who characterizes his gospel as the glorious gospel. And one may be interested to know that when the apostle uses that phrase, he does not say, "glorious" merely as we use it; he means the gospel of the glory. And the true force of that expression is this: it is the gospel of Christ glorified at the right hand of God. It is the glad tidings that we have a Saviour who is risen and glorified. We are called to all the effects of His glory as well as of His death upon the cross. Other apostles never wrote of the subject of the Church being made one with Christ; Paul alone did. Possibly, then, Paul was the only one that was in a position to say, "If one add anything to my gospel, let such an one be accursed." Although Paul added something to their gospel, they could add nothing to his. The apostles announced Christ as the Messiah and made known remission of sins through His name; but they did not bring out the heavenly glory of Christ as Paul did. He brought out all these truths, and more which they never touched on. That is the reason why he so constantly speaks of "my gospel." Because while, of course, as to the grand truths of the gospel there could be no difference between what Paul and the other

apostles preached, there was a great advance in that which Paul preached beyond them. There was nothing contradictory; but Paul being called after the ascension of our Lord to heaven, he was the one to whom it was peculiarly appropriate to make any addition. Till Paul was called, there was something still needed to make up the sum of revealed truth. In Col. 1:25, he says that he was a minister of Christ to complete the word of God, to fill up a certain space that was not filled up. Paul was the person employed by the Holy Ghost to do this. John brought out prophetic truth — prophecy entirely outside what we have been speaking of, for it reveals the dealings of God with the world, and not with the Church. Therefore, the apostle can insist strongly upon the danger of attempting to swerve from what he had brought out, or of adding anything to it. This is very important. Others might not preach all the truth, but that is not what he so strongly denounces. No person ought to be condemned because he does not unfold the higher truth of God. What we ought to set our faces against is the bringing in of something contrary to the gospel, or mingling the law with the grace of Christ — putting new wine into old bottles. Some may refer to the Epistle of James; but James never presents the law so as to clash with the gospel, although what he says may put a guard upon souls making an improper use of the solemn warning of the Holy Ghost against mingling the law with the gospel in any shape or form. There will be many occasions for showing how the Apostle Paul refers to it in this epistle.

The next point to which he alludes in his argument is his previous conversation and life. He says, speaking of his gospel, that he neither received it of man, neither was

he taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. They might have raised a doubt about this; but he shows that all his previous life was opposed to the gospel. There was not another such antagonist of Christ as he had been. “Ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God and wasted it,” (there may be a little word for them, because they were beginning to persecute all who opposed their notions about the law, and were getting into a bitter spirit,) “and profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the fathers.” There was no doubt, therefore, of the sincerity of the apostle’s use of the law in his unconverted days. “But 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.”

There he at once brings in a mass of truth, which, if they had only understood its force, as no doubt some did, ruined their whole system from top to bottom. He shows that it was God who had called him away from the law: when he was in the very midst of what they were beginning to take up afresh, he was an enemy of Christ. He gives full allowance to his providential history. He had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and had profited in the Jews’ religion above his equals. But though it pleased God to separate him from his mother’s womb, yet to call him, he insists, was much more; this call was of grace. “Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” There he both positively and negatively overthrows their legalism. He had been called to preach

among the Gentiles, where there was no law known. There was no word of God at all as to their going up to Jerusalem. And yet this was the sort of thing to which they were desiring to return. So it is at the present day. The smallest sect under the sun has got a find of Jerusalem, a centre for the minister to be sent up to, in order to qualify him for what he has to do. But where it is sought for the purpose of bringing out the glory of Christ, it proves but death. Many a person has conferred with flesh and blood, has gone up to “this mountain” or that city, and his soul has got completely lowered and taken away from the cross of Christ; and he becomes now exceedingly zealous of this very law that he had been delivered from; but the simple walk is the path of dependence upon the living God. So that however valuable these training schools may be for the world, however admirable for giving men a certain place, it ends merely in what man can teach, and not what God gives.

Moses thought that, when he had spent forty years in Egypt, he was fitted to deliver the people of God; but he had to learn that not, until he had been taught of God in the wilderness, was he competent to lead the people out of Egypt. God has generally to put souls through a sieve, and break them down in their own conceit, if He is going to use them in a really honour able way.

Here you have God Himself, when He calls a remarkable man to a very special work, instead of summoning him to the apostles at Jerusalem, sending him away into the desert. There is such a thing as not only helping the saints, but those that preach in the truth; and the Apostle Paul presses upon Timothy that the things he received, he was to commit to faithful men who should

be able to teach others also. There is human instrumentality in helping on those who are younger in the work of the Lord. Thus we must leave room for the various ways of God, only steering clear of human innovation and presumption, which can never edify man any more than honour God.

“Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again into Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.” He mentions the number of days for the purpose of showing that it was not a course of instruction that he had been receiving. “Now the things which I write unto you, behold before God I lie not. Afterwards, I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ; but they had heard only that he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me.” The facts were of moment for the purpose of evincing how little time he had spent in Jerusalem; yea, that he was unknown to the churches of Judea generally. But these churches, instead of blaming God, (which was what the Galatian conduct amounted to,) instead of finding fault with his testimony, had glorified God in Paul. The early churches of Judea, that the Galatians were looking so wistfully at, were glorifying God in him; while they themselves were quarrelling with the rich mercy God kind been showing the Gentiles. He had preached to them the gospel more fully than the other apostles had presented it; and yet they were already slipping from it by seeking to bring in the law. Paul felt it was so deadly in its own nature that, although the souls drawn aside by it might not be lost,

yet was there deep dishonour against God and incalculable mischief to His saints. No doubt they thought theirs a much safer course; but the apostle affirms that he had brought them the truth of the gospel, and that to mingle the law therewith is to subvert it altogether.

How applicable is all to the need of souls in this day of ours! We ought not to fancy that there was a deeper evil in Galatia than there is at work now. On the contrary, those were but the germs of that which has developed far more since then. The Lord give us to set our faces as a flint against all that would damage conscience, and keep us from allowing anything that we know to be contrary to His will and glory!

Galatians 2

We have still the apostle appealing to certain facts in his own life and history, as giving conclusive evidence upon the great question that had been raised: whether the law, in any form, is that under which the Christian lies? He takes it up fully as to justification, but it is not limited to that question. We see in chapters 1 and 2 the divine call to minister, so strikingly exemplified in the apostle himself, in opposition to the successional claim; and we shall find towards the latter part of the epistle, that he applies grace in all its breadth, proving that in Christ God has brought in another principle altogether, which works efficaciously, whereas the law can only curse the guilty. In short, God has established the grand basis of His own grace; and while His grace is perfectly consistent with the moral government of God, it utterly sets aside the law as powerless through the condition of man, not as if the law in itself were not holy, and just,

and good. But in Christ, God has brought in such energy of life in resurrection, and a new justifying righteousness of His own, that He for ever sets the Christian on the wholly different ground of grace. In this epistle, the apostle enters into it with so much the greater strength, because the devil was attempting to bring in a particularly evil misuse of the law.

This is, I conceive, the key to the difference of language in Romans and Galatians. In the former, there is a certain tenderness in dealing with such of the brethren there as knew the law before they knew Christ, and had been under it as Jews. Hence, in speaking of their days, and meats, and drinks, the apostle shows that the Spirit of God called for the utmost forbearance. “He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he regardeth it not. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks.” The reason was, that the saints at Rome consisted largely of those who had been Jews, and, of course, also of many who had been Gentiles. The important point therefore was to exhort to mutual respect and forbearance one with another. The Gentile brother, that knew his liberty, was not to despite his Jewish brother, because he was still giving heed to certain distinctions, keeping days, etc. Nor was the Jew to judge his Gentile brother, because he did not abstain from meats and observe days. Remember, in speaking of these days, we are not to imagine that the apostle is alluding to the Lord’s day, for it is an entirely new thing, having no connection either with creation or the law. The Sabbath was the rest of creation, and also the divinely-appointed and well-known sign between Jehovah and the Jewish people for ever, given them as a

perpetual covenant, and separating them from all other nations. But the Lord's day has an entirely new character, spoken of in Scripture as the first day of the week. It belongs to the Christian only: Adam, man, the Jew, had nothing to do with it. So that when the apostle says, "He that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he regardeth it not," let us beware of allowing the evil thought that the Lord's day is included, and the keeping of it an open question. As for days or meats, Levitically distinguished, they are left to be regarded or not, according to spiritual intelligence. Not so the Lord's day; it may not fall under the form of an express command, but it is none the less obligatory, because it comes to us stamped with the Lord's will and recognition in various solemn and touching forms. It is the day on which He rose from the deed, the day on which He sanctioned, by His special presence, the coming together of the disciples, as the Holy Ghost afterwards led them thereon regularly, to break bread. So that there should be no question that the Lord's day is of the gravest importance, the understanding of which always goes with right thoughts as to the true grace of God in which we stand. The confusion of it with the Sabbath may have been adopted to strengthen its institution by deducing it from the law; but this is a complete fallacy, lowers and weakens its character, and is the fruit and the evidence of ignorance of the ground on which the believer now stands with God. In Galatians, instead of the exhortation to brotherly forbearance, which we find impressed on the saints at Rome, there is, on the contrary, amazing strength and vehemence, as is plain in chapters 3, 4. But of this more in its own place.

The apostle refers to his going up to Jerusalem. When he says, (chap. 1:18,) “After three years I went up to Jerusalem,” it refers, I suppose, to his conversion as a starting point; and the “fourteen years after,” in this chapter, would date from the same period. The important thing for the Spirit of God was to dispose of all pretence for connecting Paul’s mission or ministry with Jerusalem. The principle of apostolic succession is thus cut off by implication. The years which elapsed before these visits, and yet more their character when he did visit Jerusalem, absolutely exclude all idea of derivation. “Then, fourteen years after, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me. And I went up by revelation.” This last circumstance is not mentioned in the Acts. It is the same occasion which is referred to there, (Acts 15,) though in a different manner. In Acts we are told, “certain men, which came down from Judea, taught the brethren and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When, therefore, Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.” But when they arrived at Jerusalem, they found there the same party. “There rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses,” clearly showing that it was within the bosom of the Church. And then we have the conference of the apostles and elders in presence of the whole Church about this matter. In Galatians 2 the Holy Ghost brings out the fact, not distinctly mentioned in the Acts, that on this occasion Paul took with him Titus, and went up by revelation: he

had positive communication from God about it. In Acts, we have the christian motives that were brought to act upon him by others; but in Galatians he lets us know something deeper still — that he went up by revelation, beside his taking Titus. Whatever may have been the case with the others, this was also a fact of immense importance, because Titus was in no way a Jew. He was not even like Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess. Titus was a Greek. Timothy was something between the two; and therefore there seems to have been wisdom and grace in the apostle's very different line with regard to Timothy. He certainly stopped the mouths of those who might have raised questions about that young disciple founded on the law, though I do not say that, strictly speaking, Timothy would have come under it. It must be allowed, that it was not according to the law for a Jewess to be married to a Gentile. Titus, however, was, beyond doubt, a Greek. The apostle, in face of the twelve apostles, and of every one, brings up to Jerusalem with him this Greek who had never been circumcised. He was acting, in the boldest manner, on the liberty that he knew he had in Christ. And he adds further, "I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which are of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain." And then he merely drops by the way, in one of his pregnant parentheses, "But neither Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised."

Let us pay attention to the manner in which the Holy Ghost refers to Paul's communicating his gospel to those in Jerusalem; for this was a death-blow to the insinuation that Paul had received it after an irregular

fashion. He adds also, “lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.” There was sufficient advance in truth in what the apostle taught, but he would not run the risk of making a split among the saints in Jerusalem. Had he been indifferent to the state of the saints, he would have brought out all the heavenly truth in which he was so far beyond the others. But there are two things that have to be taken account of in communicating truth. Not merely should there be certainty that it is truth from God, but it most also be suited truth to those whom you address. They might have needed it all, but they were not in a condition to receive it; and the more precious the truth, the greater the injury, in a certain sense, if it is presented to those who are not in a state to profit by it. Supposing persons who are under the law, what would be the good of bringing out to such the hope of Christ’s coming, or of union with Christ? There would be no room for these truths in such a spiritual condition. When persons are still under law, not knowing their death to it in Christ’s death and resurrection, they require to be established in the grace of God. This appears to be one reason why, in the epistle to the Galatians, the apostle never touches on those blessed truths. The wisdom of omitting them is apparent. Such truths would be unintelligible, or at least unsuitable, to souls in their state. To have developed them could have done them no good. There requires to be first the understanding of the complete putting aside of the law, and of our introduction in Christ into a new atmosphere altogether. The Lord had many things to tell the disciples when He was with them, but they were not able to bear them then. So the apostle tells the Hebrews that they had need of milk and not of strong meat: “for every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of

righteousness, for he is a babe; but strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even to those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." But they needed to be taught the first elements over again; yet that epistle was written not long before the destruction of Jerusalem. Nothing hinders the progress of saints so much as legal principles. The Corinthians had not been long converted, so that their ignorance was not surprising. But the Hebrews had been many years converted, and yet they were only occupied with the alphabet of Christianity. So that the real reason which hindered these Hebrew believers was, that they did not enter into their death to the law, and union with Christ risen. They were not even stedfast on the full foundation of Christian truth — the complete, eternal putting away of sins in the blood of Christ, They were not above the condition of spiritual babes.

The apostle, then, having referred to these facts, (to his having communicated his gospel to them, privately to those of reputation, and, withal, to his taking Titus with him, who was known to be a Greek, and yet not compelled to be circumcised) — leaves all this to have its weight upon the mind of the Galatians, giving also the reason, "And that because of false brethren, unawares brought in." If you read the third verse parenthetically, it adds to the clearness of the passage. He had gone up to Jerusalem, and communicated his gospel in this manner to the apostles, because of these false brethren unawares brought in He did not wish to go into controversy about truth which they were not able to bear, and yet he wished not to keep it back from those who could appreciate it. But he hints plainly what

these false brethren aimed at, “Who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.” This clearly shows the connection between legalism and the untruthfulness of such as come in privily to spy out the liberty they do not understand. “To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.”

But now he goes farther, and refers, not to false brethren that were at work undermining the gospel by the law, but to those who took the most prominent place at Jerusalem “But of those who seemed to be somewhat, whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man’s person; for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me; but contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter: (for he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles:) and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.” All the insinuations of these Jewish teachers, that there was not a substantial agreement between Paul and the other apostles, were thus disappointed. It turned out that Paul was the communicator, not Peter; and that the three chiefs there had given the right hand of fellowship to Paul.

They in no way controlled his ministry, but perceived the grace that was given to him. They felt, in fact, both as regards God and His power that wrought in Paul, that he

and Barnabas were the most fitting persons to deal with the uncircumcision. The vast sphere of the heathen world was evidently for Paul and those with him, while they remained confined to their narrow circle. Paul is here destroying the effort of the enemy to put the Gentile believer under the law.

Next he takes yet another step. For while he shows the respect that Peter and James and John in Jerusalem had to himself and to his work, he does another thing still more disastrous to those who would impose the law on Gentiles. “But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.” So far was Paul from being withstood by Peter at Jerusalem, that Peter gave him the right hand of fellowship. But when Peter was come to Antioch, Paul withstood him to the face. And this clearly was a thing well known. “For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles,” which was a mark of communion with them, even now and everywhere the well-known sign of what is equivalent. I am not speaking here of eating the Lord’s Supper, which is the highest symbol of communion; but, in ordinary life, to take a common meal together is the token of friendly feeling, and with Christians it ought specially to be so, for they are called to walk in everything with godly sincerity. Hence the importance attached to the act with people among Christians, and more especially in the face of Jewish separation from Gentiles, which, under the law, was God’s command. Peter had been in the habit of eating with the Gentiles, a thought which no man, acting on Jewish principles, could have entertained; but when certain persona tame from James, “he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the

circumcision.” How marvellous is the influence of prejudices, of legal prejudices especially! Swayed thereby, Peter gives up his liberty, and no longer eats with the Gentiles: and this was the very chief of the apostles! Trifling as the act might seem, it was a weighty one in the eyes of God and of His servant. Paul was given to see that in this seemingly little thing the truth of the gospel was surrendered.

Let us consider how solemn and how practical a thing this is. In some simple matter of every-day life there may be a virtual abandonment of Christ and the truth of the gospel, a lie against His grace. It is well to bear in mind that, in a commonplace act, in a thing that might seem to be of no comparative importance, God would have us to look at things in their sources, as they touch the truth and grace of God. We are apt to make light of what relates to God, and to make what affects ourselves of great account. But God in His goodness would have us feel deeply what concerns Christ and the gospel, passing by what affects ourselves. Why should Paul thus rebuke Peter publicly! Was there not a cause? Was there not a crisis come in the history! Where Peter was acting as the apostle of the circumcision, there Paul speaks privately. But now, when the foundation of grace was concerned, the same man is bold as a lion, and withstands Peter to the face because he was to be condemned. There was no compromise, no timidity, no mere human prudence about the matter, no consideration of lids own character or Peter’s, but there was the looking at Christ’s glory in the gospel. It was in the very field where Peter was peculiarly responsible to his Master to maintain the truth, and there he had failed. Therefore the Apostle Paul stood on firm ground here, and acted fearlessly. He

withstood Peter to the face, who did not show himself at all according to the Lord's new name, in this business. He was more like Simon-Barjonas than the rock-man, which he should have been. He had fallen back into his own natural ways; for ardour of nature is constantly given to reaction. What gave such strength to the apostle's remonstrance, was that this took place after that solemn conference at Jerusalem, where Peter took an active part to prove the liberty that God had given to the Gentiles; where he showed that God had made choice among them, that by his mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe it; where he had wound up his declaration by the remarkable words so galling to Jewish pride, and strengthening the Gentiles who might have been uneasy: "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they." He had taught, yea, in the face of the Jews, not that the Gentiles should be saved even as they, but that the Jewish believers should be saved even as the Gentiles. So that nothing could be stronger. He had no thought of treating the Gentiles as if they were only now blessed on some irregular and disputable tenure of mercy; for in truth, God was bringing out salvation to the Gentiles more clearly, if there was any difference. "We believe, that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they." The Gentile salvation was made the very pattern of those who should be saved among the Jews. And what a sorrow that after all this, Peter should, even on this head, go astray! And Barnabas himself, not the companion of Peter, but of Paul — who had first discerned his worth and devotedness, and had joined him in so many labour.) among the Gentiles — who had been specially named as one of those who should go up

to Jerusalem to set at rest this grave question; he was drawn away by the dissimulation of Peter and the rest! The Apostle Paul was not wanting to the occasion, and soon discerns that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel. But wherein had they shown this lack of uprightness? In ceasing to eat with the Gentiles. Thus, on a dinner depended the truth of the gospel. The simple act of eating or not eating with the Gentiles betrays one's heart as to the question of deliverance from the law.

So fatal a point was this, if allowed, that Paul says to Peter before them all, "If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, how compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" What had Peter been about? He had not, in any wise, maintained the law as a rule for the Jewish believers. Why, then, did he yield to an act which implied it among the Gentiles? If it was not so in Jerusalem, where God had of old bound it upon their conscience, what a turning away from the truth, that one who knew his deliverance should practically insist upon it at Antioch! This was the serious matter for which Paul rebuked Peter. And now he reasons upon it: "We who are Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles," (the force of "we," as compared with "you," is necessary to be remarked in this epistle and elsewhere,) "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Bear in mind, also, that when the Apostle Paul dwells upon law, he does not confine his remarks to the Jewish law, but reasons

abstractedly. He says and means not merely that you cannot be justified by the works of the law, but by no law at all. If there was a law that could justify, it must be the law of God divulged by Moses. But Paul goes farther, and insists that “by works of law” you cannot be justified. The law-principle is opposed to justification instead of being the means of it. He takes up the fact, that by these works of law no flesh can be justified.

But he proceeds to argue the point, and asks, “If while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.” That is, if professing faith in the Lord Jesus, you go back to the law, the effect is necessarily to bring you in a sinner. You have in truth sin in your nature, and the consequence is, that if you have to do with the law at all, this is the very condition in which you are left as a sinner after all. The law never gives deliverance from sin: as the apostle says elsewhere, “The strength of sin is the law.” So that, if while you seek to be justified by Christ, you are found a sinner, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? This is the issue to which the law necessarily leads. It lays hold of sin. And therefore, if after you have got Christ, you are only found after all through the law to be a sinner, you, in effect, make Christ the minister of sin. Such is the necessary consequence of bringing in the law after Christ. The soul that has to do with the law never realizes its deliverance from sin; on the contrary, the law, merely detecting the evil, and not raising the soul above it, leaves the man powerless and miserable and condemned.

Some people talk of “a believing sinner,” or speak of the worship offered to God by “poor sinners.” Many hymns indeed never bring the soul beyond this condition. But

what is meant by “sinner” in the word of God is a soul altogether without peace, a soul which may perhaps feel its want of Christ, being quickened by the Spirit, but without the knowledge of redemption. It is not truthfulness to deny what saints are in the sight of God. If I have failed in anything, will taking the ground of a poor sinner make the sin to be less, or give me to feel it more? No! If I am a saint, blessed with God in His beloved Son, made one with Christ, and the Holy Ghost given to dwell in me, then I say, What a shame, if I have failed, and broken down, and dishonoured the Lord, and been indifferent to His glory! But if I feel my own coldness and indifference, it is to be treated as baseness, and to be hated as sin. Whereas, to take the ground of a poor sinner, is really, though it may not be intended, to make excuses for evil. Which of the two ways would act most powerfully upon the conscience? which humbles man and exalts God most? Clearly the more that you realize what God has given you, and made you in Christ — if you are walking inconsistently with it — the more you feel the sin and dishonour of your course. Whereas, if you keep speaking about yourself merely as a sinner, it may seem lowly to the superficial, but it only becomes a kind of palliative of your evil, which in this case never humbles so thoroughly as God looks for in the child of faith.

Take another instance from forms of worship, which are constructed on that principle. The first thing is that they quote Scripture about a wicked man turning away from his wickedness. But if you can begin again every Sunday afresh as a Christian, and yet needing priestly absolution, it leaves room for the heart to act treacherously to the Lord all the rest of the week, beside

being a virtual denial of the efficacy of His work. This is a very serious matter. The week's preparation for the sacrament is the same kind of thing. It is the wicked man turning away from his wickedness, renewing his vows and endeavouring to amend. Even in the third and fourth century, when they spoke about the Lord's Supper, they called it a "tremendous sacrifice," etc. All that completely ignores the very basis of Christianity, which is, that "by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." And by "them that are sanctified," I maintain that the Holy Ghost is speaking of all Christians, — of that separation which is equally true of all believers, whether churchmen or dissenters, or of those who, renouncing sectional ground, understand better, as I believe, what God wills about His Church. This will tend to show how very serious is the question of the law. There is no deliverance, where and while it is maintained, from the condition of a sinner. Christian worship is an impossibility under such circumstances. If this be the case, Christ becomes the minister of sin; because I am supposed to be left by Him under the bondage of my sin, instead of being delivered from it: "for if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor." That is, in going to Christ, I give up the law virtually; and if after all that, I go back to the law, then I make myself a transgressor. It is plain that if I am right now, I was entirely wrong before. Who was it made me give up the law? It was Christ. So that if I go back to the law, the gospel of Christ is the means of making people transgressors, and not of justifying them. The Galatians had never thought of this. But the Holy Ghost brings the light of His own truth to bear upon them, and shows what they were doing involved. The

effect of enforcing the law was, virtually, to make Christ the minister of sin, instead of the deliverer from it!

But not so. “For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.” There he shows how it is that he was dead to the law. It was through the law. It was not mercy a thing done outside his own soul. He had gone through the question within most thoroughly. He had been under the law: and when God had quickened him, and conscience awoke under divine light, he realized what he had never dreamt before — his own utter powerlessness. “I through the law am dead to the law.” He had felt truly his position as a sinner, and owns the killing, not quickening, power of the law. But then, this was of grace now, not judgment by and by. Hence, says the apostle, if I am dead by law, I am dead to law, and completely outside its reach. I am dead, and need die by it no more; I am dead to it that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live, “yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” Thus, in the soul of the apostle, we have law upheld in its utmost strength, and yet himself set free in Christ, and outside it In grace. So in Christ we have the same thing, at the end of Romans 3. “Do we, then, make void the law through faith? God forbid. Yea, we establish the law.” How is it maintained? Christ’s death was the strongest and most divine sanction the law ever had. It was the law laying hold of the Surety, and carried out to the full, in the person of Christ; so that its authority, as faith knows, has been perfectly made good in Him. It is fully carried out, and far, far more, too, in the death of Christ. But if you apply that Scripture to prove that the law is to be established over Christians as their rule of life, it is as ignorant as it is false. The law is the rule of death, not of life: and that

is what Paul's experience proves. "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." How did he live unto God? Not in that old life, to which only the law applies, for he says he was crucified with Christ, who suffered in his stead. But Christ is risen, as well as dead, and risen, that Paul, that I, might live to God: no longer I indeed, but Christ lives in me — a wholly new life. The law touches the old life, and has no authority beyond it. The moment that I believe, I live, and the life is Christ, and it is founded upon the cross. And moreover, says he, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." I have, of course, my natural life here below, but that wherein I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God. The believer does live by looking, not at the law, but at Christ. Thus, there cannot be a more definitive setting aside of the law in every shape and form. The believer is ushered into a new state of being altogether — a life nourished by the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. It is Christ, not only characterizing the new creature, but as a living, loving person before the soul. Therefore he can say, "I do not frustrate the grace of God." But those did, who maintained the law for righteousness in any shape. "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." The effect of the law, even upon the believer, is, that he never rises by his own confession above the feelings and experiences of a sinner. He is always in that condition — always crying, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Whereas, when he enters into the glorious place that he has in Christ, he is able to say, "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." He ought to say, O happy that I am!

Christ has delivered me! “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” Such is the true and sure place of the Christian. Christ has indeed not died for nothing in such a case.

Galatians 3

The first section of the chapter is devoted to the contrast of the principles of law and of faith, not exactly of promise, but of faith. The part which follows takes up the subject of promise, and shows the mutual relations of law and promise; but the early verses are devoted to a wider domain. For we must bear in mind that faith has a variety of sphere and operation, beside the promise of God. There is no doubt that the promises belong to faith; but then it may embrace and profit by much more than what was (not revealed, but) promised. For when we talk of promises, it is not merely the general blessings God speaks of, such as His grace to guilty sinners, but certain definite privileges which were assigned beforehand to Abraham, and are now “yea and amen” in all their spiritual power in Christ — promises which will, in a future day, be fulfilled to the letter as well as in spirit, when it pleases God to convert His ancient people. Then there will be the wonderful display of all blessing, heavenly and earthly, made good through the same glorious person, the source and centre of it all, the Lord Jesus Christ. But in the part of the chapter before us, it is not so much a question of promise, but rather how the blessing is to be got at all.

The Galatians had been brought, not long since, under the immense privilege of the apostle’s preaching, into the enjoyment of the power and blessing of Christianity; and now, sad to say, they were in danger of slipping

away, and they had lost the sense of grace in their souls. By what means had they originally received blessing from God? This question was raised by the last verse of the chapter before. Because the apostle had there pressed home the great point the Holy Spirit is illustrating in this epistle, namely, that it is not the law, but the grace of God in Christ, that freely gives all the blessing the Christian enjoys. He had brought us up to this already, that “I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.” He showed how this came to pass in his own case, who was a Jew, and was therefore necessarily under the law of God in a way in which no Gentile, as such, could be; how it was that he had been delivered from it and could now adopt such different language. He says, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” So that, in one point of view, he speaks of himself as dead, in another as alive; but that life in which he lived now, was Christ in him. The old “I” he treats as a dead thing. All that constituted his natural character, the old self which was amenable to the law, is treated as crucified. The reason is obvious. What is the spring of a man’s energy and the end of everything in this world? What mingles with and corrupts all thoughts and desires? It is self. Whether you look at courage, or generosity, or care for one’s family, and country, and religion — all these things had been found in Paul before conversion; but one thing lay deeper than any other, and that was self. Yet was it all slain in the cross of Christ, which judged his whole moral being as being founded upon that which was corrupt — i. e., himself. Paul’s character was dealt with from its inmost depths. Henceforward he starts from the principle of having now another for his life, even Christ; and while he was found entering into His

love, and carrying out His will, it was Christ, an object before him, who was the power of life, through the Holy Ghost, in him.

Nor is this peculiar to some; on the contrary, Christ is the life of every Christian, but it may not be always manifested. You may find the old man breaking out in pride, vanity, love of ease, the force of old habits. Where this is the case, it is, of course, the old nature allowed to show itself afresh through lack of occupation with Christ and the exercise of self-judgment.

There can be no such thing as Christ dead in us, so to speak; but when, practically, we are not living on Christ, this soon works out, and betrays itself in our ways, which brought Christ to the cross. The apostle had come to this point: it was Christ living in him, not the law. “I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.” All that the law could do was to bring in its killing power upon them that were under it. There was no striving, as we often see in these days, to keep the law in a spiritual way now that he was converted; but “I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.” That expression, “live unto God,” is very serious and beautiful. The law never produced life in a single soul: it kills. Whereas here you find Paul dead to the law, but alive unto God on a totally different principle. The question was, How did this life come? If all that the law did was to bring conscious death upon his soul, (which refers to his going through the sense of condemnation before God,) what is the spring of the new life? Not the law, but Christ. He has done with the law, in Christ, and he is left free, yea, and has life in him to live unto God. Hence he says, “Not I, but Christ liveth in me.” So that this shows us not only the source and

character of the new life, but that it is all sustained by the self-same thing which gave it existence. As it was the faith of Christ that produced the life, so it is the faith of Christ that is its power. A person may admire what is good and lovely, but this is another thing from being it. And what gives power? Looking to Christ; the soul feasting itself upon Christ. The objective means is Christ "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God" — they did — "for if righteousness came by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." It was their principle that righteousness came by the law, and not alone in Christ dead and risen. Then, says he, if it be so, "Christ is dead in vain." Were it merely a question of the law, all the necessity would have been that Christ should live and strengthen us to keep the law. But He is dead. Their doctrine, he insists, makes Christ to be dead gratuitously; whereas it is in truth the essential thing, the very and only way in which the grace of God comes to the soul.

Having touched upon this great truth, he cannot refrain from an abrupt and startling rebuke, as he feels, by the contrast, how grievous the loss was. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you [that ye should not obey the truth]?" The expression, "that ye should not obey the truth," is one brought in from Galatians 5:7. "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" There it is most undeniably and properly inserted, but here it is left out in the best copies of the epistle. I am not founding anything upon it, but merely state the fact by the way, because it is right to do so on fitting occasions. One main form of this meddling with Scripture consisted in transplanting a

text, or phrase, that is perfectly true in its right place, from some other part of Scripture. “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? “It is plain that he draws particular attention to the cross of Christ — not merely to His blood, or His death, but to His cross. And you will observe, if you examine the word of God, that the particular form in which Christ’s death — is set forth by the Holy Ghost, is invariably in connection with the use which has to be made of it practically. Throughout the Hebrews the point, with a little but weighty exception, is not the cross, but the blood of Christ; while in the Romans it is mainly His death, the blood often, but death the grand staple of the argument. Why does the Holy Ghost here say, not merely that He shed His blood, (which is the thing that a Christian, happy in the knowledge of forgiveness; would dwell upon,) but “crucified among you?” There is nothing in vain in Scripture: there is no bringing anything into prominence without a divine reason for it. The crucifixion puts shame upon man, and upon the flesh more than any other thing. The effect of Christ’s death, simply, does not give me man made nothing of, end the utter worthlessness of human nature as before God. When the apostle wants to show the absolute separation of the Christian from the world, he says, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” Now it is plain that this is a much graver and more forcible way of putting the case. There is nothing the world counted so foolish as the cross. Philosophers scorned the notion that a divine person should thus die: it was something that seemed so weak and objectless. They had no just sense of the

horribleness of sin, of man's positive enmity to God, and of His solemn, eternal judgment. The cross is the means of bringing all out. But more than that; the cross not merely shows what the flesh is, and the world, but it also proves the hopelessness of looking to the law to bring in blessing, save in a negative way. There is such a thing as the power of the law to kill, but not to quicken; Christ alone does this.

The apostle puts it to their own recollection and experience, how it was that the Spirit had been received, and miracles wrought, and they had got blessing. Was it by the law? The Galatians were heathens, worshipping stocks and stones, and it was out of this state that they were brought, not by the law, but by the knowledge of Christ. This puts it in a very pungent, as well as effective, form. Had it been God's way to have used the law as a means, would He not have employed the Apostle Paul to bind it upon them? But nothing of the kind. He had brought forth God before them in His holy, saving love. In the sermon to the Athenians, on Mars' hill, he had demonstrated the folly of their idolatry; he had shown that it was contrary even to their own boasted reason to worship what they had made. There was that above them and around them, every day and everywhere, which indicated the finger of One who had created them. Even one of their own poets had said that they were His offspring, not making God our offspring, or, yet less, the work of men's hands, which is just what idolatry does. The apostle always goes to the conscience of men, and shows the evident way in which the devil had perplexed their minds, and taken them away from the patent facts outside them, which ought to have shown a God above them, and to

have furnished proofs of His beneficent goodness. Then he brings out the solemn truth, that God is calling all men everywhere to repent; to bow to Him in acknowledgment of their sin, (which is only another way of expressing repentance,) on the ground that He had "appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness, (not the law, but all in righteousness,) by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." It is Christ that is put before them, and not the law. This was the truth habitual with the apostle. So in the case of these Galatians. He recalls them to the way in which they had received blessing; "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?" It is an important advance upon the chapter before, which only speaks of life; but Galatians 3 introduces the Holy Ghost. Down to the end of verse 15, you will find that, as he begins with the Spirit as the proof of God's blessing men, so he ends with the Spirit. The argument is to prove that the connection of the Holy Ghost is with faith, and not with law which has only a curse for guilty man. Christ is our life, and He gives the Spirit.

It is important to distinguish life and the Spirit; because when a soul receives the gospel, though there be ordinarily the reception of life and of the Holy Ghost at the same moment, yet we must bear in mind that the two things are quite distinct. The new life which the Christian receives in Christ is not God, though of God; but the Holy Ghost is very God. The believer's life is a new creature or creation, while the Holy Ghost is the Creator. It is not because we have a new life that our bodies are made the temple of God, but because the

Holy Ghost dwells therein. Hence, when Christians do not properly distinguish this, it is very possible to use that life as a thing to comfort oneself with and set us at ease, leading us to say, I know that I shall be saved; and all spiritual exercises may close there. How often souls settle down to rest in the satisfaction that they have got life, or exercise that life only in the desire to bring souls to Christ! But, blessed as this zeal is, it is a very inferior thing to loving Christ; as love to Christ is an inferior thing to the enjoyment of His love to us; and I believe this to be the true order in the souls of the saints of God. The great thing that God calls upon me for, is to admire and delight in and learn more and more of the love of Christ. What is the effect? Love to Christ is produced in the very same ratio that I know His love to me. What is it that judges self and keeps it down, and raises a person above all grovelling ways and ends? Entrance into the blessedness of His love. Being filled with the sense of it, we love souls in a different way, because we see them in His light, and we view them out of His affections, and not merely as having some link with ourselves. This is the true secret of all spiritual power, at least, in its highest forms.

Take, again, any little suffering we undergo for Christ's sake, any work undertaken for Him — whatever God calls us to: in all these things the true blessing of the Christian is not to abstract them from Christ, but to have Christ Himself as the spring and pattern and measure of all our service, so that all our service should flow from our enjoyment of Christ. In one way, worship is a nearer thing to God, and ought to be a dearer thing to the child of God, than even service; whereas it is no uncommon thing to find zealous servants who know very

little of true worship. I say this, not that we should serve Christ less, but that we should enjoy Him more, and serve Him in the spirit of enjoying what He is, apart from all circumstances. What is the basis of this measure of enjoyment? It is the absolute peace and rest of our heart in Him and His work. We see how completely every sin is met and every need of our soul supplied in Christ. We are put as children in the presence of a father; one knows that his father uses all his resources for the good of his child. In the poor sinner there is the sense of need, and the soul must go through that first. In the experience of almost every regenerate soul there is a state where there is life, but in the midst, perhaps, of the greatest ignorance, yet with deep feeling of sin. This is not properly the Christian state; which, when rightly apprehended, supposes rest in Christ, with the consciousness that all is given me of God in Him. I have received the Spirit of adoption, not the spirit of bondage. It is not merely that my soul is awakened to feel sin, but the Holy Ghost dwells in me; and the result of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, is that I know I have received this full blessing from God.

In Galatians 2, as we have remarked, life is in question; but now, in the beginning of Galatians 3, he speaks about the reception of the Spirit. This was not merely a matter of enjoyment, but also accompanied by miraculous power. When at that time the Holy Ghost was given, there were outward external ways in which He showed Himself, which were not continued in the Church. He puts the two together here. “Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” or, “are ye being made

perfect by the flesh?" It was a process that they were hoping to be perfected by; because flesh can easily be satisfied with itself. "Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain." He will not give them up; he will not suppose that the enemy is gaining such a victory over them but that they may be recovered from this state. "He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" This refers to Paul himself. It was God that gave the Spirit, but He worked by means: by those who had been preaching the gospel had they received the Holy Ghost. It is the hearing of faith that is followed by the gift of the Spirit, after we have received Christ; but there is always a distinction between the two things. You will find in Scripture that the reception of the Spirit was, at least sometimes, after believing in Christ. Take the instance of the Samaritans. Was not the Spirit communicated to them some time after conversion? And so, not to speak of Cornelius, was it with the Ephesian disciples in Acts 19.

Thus we see many a soul that hears the gospel filled with joy, but it passes away; and perhaps they will have to go through a very painful process afterwards, because they had not really understood the application of Christ's work to their souls. They have simply embraced the reality of a blessed divine person who is full of love, even the Lord Jesus; but then, when they have received that, the sense of failure comes up, and they go through much heart-breaking and ploughing up. I could not say of such persons, that they have received the Spirit of God as One dwelling in them, the seal of the blessing they have found in Christ. But when they are

brought to rest in Him, with all the sense of their sin and of what they are, and yet, in spite of it all, to rest in the redemption that is in Christ, so that, in the face of everything, knowing what God is, what Satan is, what they themselves are, what the law of God is, — still, being justified by faith, they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; such persons have received the Holy Ghost; they have not only life, but the Spirit of God. In early times this distinction was brought out very clearly; but the same principle is, of course, true now. There are no souls that have looked to Christ but what God will give them the Spirit of adoption, and they will thus be brought into full blessing. But often this may be upon a deathbed, which ought not to be the case with a Christian.

There is such a scanty measure of truth preached even among real Christians in the present day, that souls have not the consciousness of their relationship nor of the completeness of redemption. Hence it is that they may be kept from their proper comfort and enjoyment for many a day. It was not so with these Galatians; and the apostle refers to their full blessing. At once they were brought into the possession of the Holy Ghost. They had received Him by the hearing of faith: and I take it, that this means His reception in every way; not only with a view to miracles and powers, but the Holy Ghost yet more as One dwelling within them. Where souls were not born of God, but had merely outwardly professed Christ, they might receive the Spirit for gifts of power, but not in the way of communion. Thus in Hebrews 6 you have persons who were once enlightened, and had tasted of the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and had tasted the good word of God,

and the powers of the world to come, and who yet had fallen away. It is nowhere said that they were quickened, or that they had life; but they were enlightened and had tasted of the heavenly gift; they had been baptized and had the powers of the world to come: all these things were true of them, yet they fell away — they deserted Christ; they went back from Him to Judaism in order to make their conscience easy with God. Where this was the case, the apostle says, “It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance.” They are apostates, and that is the point of the question. For on a large scale, similar will be the means of bringing in the worst doom, which must inevitably follow the denial of Christianity. And necessarily so, for God has nothing better to bring in; nothing whereby He can act upon man when He rejects christian revelation and the grace of Christ. These Galatians were convicted by this very thing. They knew that they had not heard about the law, and yet they had received the Spirit personally. Let them think what the reception of the Holy Ghost involves — that it is not only the manifestation of power, but the deeper blessing that abides now. And how good of God that it should be so, that He has not taken away the spring of enjoying Christ. We might have thought that, so deep has been the failure, if anything had been likely to be taken away, it would be that enjoyment of Christ.

At Pentecost the saints were all, or most, at any rate, babes. It is a moral misunderstanding of that day, as well as of the previous state of the disciples to suppose that the wonderful display of power there was then, showed a deeper enjoyment of Christ vouchsafed then and there, than elsewhere afterwards. And so one sees now that there is a danger of persons fancying that the richest

harvest-time of peace and joy possible is at the hour of conversion; whereas, at best, it is the enjoyment of a babe. There is a mighty sense of deliverance; but sense of deliverance is not necessarily Christ, nor the sweetest way of tasting Him. It is connected with our sense of the love of Christ, and this we assuredly are privileged to enjoy; but there is a knowledge and delight in Christ Himself which is a deeper thing still, and it is based upon a growing acquaintance with His personal glory and love, as well as His work.

These Galatians were getting under the law, and the apostle brings the folly of it all before them. They were seeking to be made perfect by the flesh. This is mere nature, working upon what has to do with self, and not with the unfolding of Christ. There were certain things they thought which were quite necessary for them to do. Well, he argues, that is the flesh. “Have ye suffered so many things in vain?” Then he shows that it had all been by the hearing of faith, and he goes up to Abraham himself. “Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” There is great force in his reference to Abraham; for every Jew would appeal to him as the root of circumcision; and the mode in which the law was brought in among the Galatians was by attaching great importance to the right of circumcision. It would appear that the argument of these Judaizing men was this: — You cannot have the inner blessing of circumcision without going through the outward form of it. The apostle summons Abraham to prove the contrary. In his case, it was a question of faith, and not of law, or of circumcision. When was it that Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness? Before circumcision came in; for the rite,

as is evident from the history, was enjoined, we are particularly informed, after Abraham had believed God, and God had accounted it to him for righteousness.

“Know ye, therefore,” he continues, “that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.” This is the deduction he draws from it. If Abraham was brought into this place of blessing by faith, all his seed are blessed similarly. He begins with the natural seed, the Jew; but he brings in the Gentiles also. “And the scriptures, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” We shall find afterwards that he does not argue on the promise to Abraham himself only, but to his seed; but he purposely leaves out the seed here. He refers to the first promise to Abraham, because, when that was made, there was no thought of circumcision. He says, “The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.” It showed that they would be blessed as Gentiles — not by becoming Jews virtually; for the blessing would flow out to them as Gentiles. “So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” There he closes that part of the subject, proving that the blessing depends upon faith, and not upon the works of the law or circumcision. Abraham was blessed by faith, and God had promised him, “In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed” — not in circumcision, but in Abraham; so that we find in Abraham’s case the principle of a promise comes in. In fact, he was an idolator at the time when God revealed

Himself to him, as we learn from Joshua 24: and true blessing is always the effect of God's revealing Himself to the soul. The effect of this revelation to Abraham is, that he leaves his country and his father's house, and goes forth at the word of God, not knowing whither he went. He counted upon God's goodness towards his soul. He receives from God the promise of blessing, and of blessing for others, too; as it was said, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." And here is the manner of it: "So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." As blessing depended upon faith, so, he argues, does yours.

Then, in a most solemn and sweeping sentence, which bears the very stamp of God upon it, he adds, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Would that those who desire to be teachers of the law, only understood such a word as this! Not as many as have broken the law, but as many persons as take their stand upon legal ground are under the curse; whoever attempts to please God on this principle is fallen under it. And why? Because there is such a thing as sin. And if man with sin upon him, or in him, essays to make good his cause by the law, as far as the principle goes, he is under the law's curse. We need not await the proof as a matter of fact; he who does so is condemned. If God were to deal with men as they deal with God, they must be adjudged to death; and there could be no help or deliverance for them. Regeneration does not deliver, and cannot be urged as a plea. If they are governed by the law as their rule, it necessarily condemns those who break it. Nothing can be more conclusive: "As many as

are of the works of the law are under the curse," etc. So that, if I stand upon this ground, there is not the slightest provision made for failure, unless I also plead sacrifices and offerings for sin. If I do not continue in all things as they are written in the book of the law — if I do not succeed in observing them all faultlessly, I am accursed. Could such a standing ever do for a Christian? Impossible; and therefore all is inconsistent with those who so speak; for they do really rest after all on Christ. But what says St. Paul? "That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident;" because, as another scripture announces, "The just shall live by faith." It is a total mistake to suppose that it is by law, as its source, its power, or its measure. "And the law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them shall live in them."

In verse 13 he closes this part of the subject, and shows that our position as Christians is entirely different. He begins with the Jew. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." It is exceedingly blessed to find that, as in 2 Corinthians 5, it is said that Christ was made sin, so here it is said that "He is made a curse for us." In Corinthians Paul is merely putting himself with the believers — he is not drawing a contrast between us and the Jew; consequently the "we" in Corinthians includes all. But here the "us" means the Jewish part of the believers; for he refers particularly and distinctly to the Gentiles afterwards — "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." And then he puts them all together — "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

The “us” there is emphatic; whereas in verse 14 the word “we” is not so at all, but is used in a general way of all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles. So that the point is very plain. First, if Jews were concerned, he would say, We equally needed Christ; because we had not continued in all the things that are written in the book of the law to do them; and Christ came and redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. Then, as to you Gentiles — you who never had anything to do with the law, are you seeking to be blessed on the very ground where we can only expect cursing? The apostle quotes from Deut. 27, where we have a very striking disclosure, as has been well remarked by another. Half of the tribes were to stand upon one mountain to bless, and the other half upon another mountain to curse. But when, immediately after, the provision comes out, only the curses are mentioned, and there is no blessing at all! Why? “As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.” God had spoken of the tribes being divided for blessing and cursing; but when you come to the fact, only the curses follow, and not the blessings. What a very solemn confirmation of the truth we have been looking at! God did not positively provide for any thus to get the blessing. As sure as they took legal ground, they could only get a curse; and accordingly the curses alone are heard.

The apostle, therefore, triumphantly closes this part of the subject. After coming to the full acknowledgment of the law’s curse because of sin, then through the grace of God can the believer say, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” It is not merely that He has been made accursed for us, but “a curse.” What could more forcibly convey how fully He

identified Himself with that condition as a whole? The consequence is, that those He represented in grace are completely delivered from it; yea, and the blessing, once flowing, bursts far beyond the old channel. So he says, “As it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.” First of all, God must remove the curse out of the way; and when that was holily done for these believing Jews, the same cross of Christ overflows with mercy to the Gentiles. Christ had accomplished the work of redemption; and though its primary application was to the Jew, yet surely the efficacy and glory of it could not be hid. The blessing of Abraham comes on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ — “that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

This concludes the argument based on the promise of the Spirit; and the points decided are these: — the law never brought a blessing upon those who were under it, even though they were Abraham’s seed, and this, because they were sinners; nor was it ever the means of their receiving the Holy Ghost as the power of enjoying Christ. On the other hand, the hearing of faith, as of old for Abraham himself, is the one simple means that the Holy Ghost uses for all real peace and blessing; and this avails, through redemption, not only for the proud but accursed Jew, but even for the poor Gentile, now expressly contemplated in the blessing, and in the richest part of it, the promise of the Spirit.

In the former part of the chapter, we saw the contrast between the portion of faith and that of law. We found that the law necessarily brings in a curse; not that the law is bad, but because men — because Israel — were

sinners. The law, therefore, just because it is holy, just, and good, must condemn those that were not good, but evil. The conclusion of the law, for such, accordingly, was a curse. It was the law of God; but all that His law could or ought to procure for sinners was condemnation and a curse. On the other hand, God loves to bless. How can these things be? How was it possible that God could bring in a blessing for poor lost man? The answer is, that “they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” Abraham got not a curse but a blessing, and this because of faith and not law. The apostle thence proves that since the law, no matter how good in itself, can only bring a curse upon every soul who takes this ground in its dealings with God, “as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.” Nothing could be more universal or more conclusive. The law involves nothing but a curse upon every child of Adam who attempts to take his stand on it as a means of relationship with God. Am I seeking and vowing to obey God in order to gain a blessing from Him? I only earn a curse. I ought to obey; but, I being a sinner, the effect of the law is to bring out my sin and curse me. On the other hand, faith brings me into a blessing, yea, all blessing through God’s grace.

Now we come to the question of promise, which is a very different thing. Faith involves, at any rate, the condition of soul in the person who believes; the promise looks at the dealings of God; and although we have seen that those who have faith are the only receivers of the blessing, and not those essaying to do the law, now we have to consider God promising, as well as law given. “Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; though it be but a man’s covenant, yet, if it be confirmed, no man

disannulleth or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made" — not the law given. Abraham knew nothing about the law, neither did his seed or son; yet they could not deny that Abraham got the blessing. So that here he stands on a new ground. It is not only that souls which have faith will get the blessing, but why not have faith in the law too? The latter part of the chapter takes up this question, and shows that God has given promises; and the question is, how to reconcile God's law with His promises. What did He give these two things for? Were they meant to produce the same end? Were they on the same principle? The Holy Ghost settles these questions. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed; which is Christ." Here it is plain, that the allusion is to two distinct and signal occasions in Abraham's history. These two occasions were first to Abraham alone; (Gen. 12;) and secondly, to Isaac, or rather in Isaac alone. (Gen. 22) In the last chapter, both the numerous seed and the single seed are referred to. With the numerous seed God connects the possessing the gate of their enemies — that is, Jewish supremacy, But this is not what one acquires as a Christian. I do not want my enemies to be overthrown, but rather to be brought to Christ. But the Jews, as such, will have not only blessing through Christ by-and-by, but their enemies put down. Israel will be exalted in the earth, which God never promised to the Gentiles. In Genesis 22. the two things are quite distinct. Where the seed is spoken of without allusion to number, the blessing of the Gentiles comes in; but where they are said to be multiplied as the stars and the sand, then the character is unequivocally Jewish precedence. Such is, I believe,

the argument of the apostle. Where Christ, typified by Isaac, is meant, it is “thy seed” simply, without a word of seed innumerable as the stars or the sand. “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made;” namely, of the blessing of the Gentiles, and not merely of the putting down of the Gentiles. The promises were made first to Abraham, and then were confirmed in his seed. “He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and of thy seed, which is Christ.” He takes Christ as the one intended by Isaac.

Let me recall the circumstances under which God made the promise in Isaac as a type of Christ. In Genesis 22 Isaac is ready to be offered as a sacrifice, and Abraham did not know till the last moment but that his son was to die. For three days Isaac was, as it were, under the sentence of death. Abraham had confidence in God, who had promised that in Isaac he should possess the land; and he was, therefore, certain that in this very Isaac the promise must be accomplished. It was not a question of Sarah having another son, but of this son, his only son. He was perfectly assured, therefore, that God would raise him up and give him back again, to be the head of the Jewish family. A beautiful type this, of God’s sparing not His own Son. Abraham had as good as offered up his son, and God not only gave Isaac back again, but then and there gave the promise, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” Thus it is in Christ risen from the dead that our blessing comes. Christ dead and risen again is perfectly free to bless the Gentiles. As long as He was merely living on the earth, He said, “I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” but, when risen, all is changed. Accordingly, He commissions His disciples, “Go ye therefore and make

disciples of all nations." And so He predicted the gospel must be published among all nations. The apostle draws attention to the fact, that this early oracle does not connect the numerous seed when God spoke of blessing the Gentiles, but the one seed, Isaac, as the type of Christ, and of Christ after He had been under death and had passed into resurrection. The importance of this is immense; because, while Christ was upon the earth, He was under law Himself. Risen from the dead, what had He to do with law? The law does not touch a man when he is dead. The apostle argues that the Christian belongs to Christ in resurrection. When any one is baptized into Christ, this is what He confesses: — I belong to Christ dead and risen, taken out of my old place of Jew or Gentile. The Jews had to do with a Messiah who was to reign over them on the earth; the Gentiles in that day shall be the tail and not the head, and kings shall be the nursing fathers of Zion, and queens the nursing mothers, bowing down to the earth and licking up the dust of Israel's feet; but we, Christians, begin with Christ's death and resurrection. All our blessing is in Christ raised from the dead.

"And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ," (or, as it should be rendered, "to Christ,") "the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." God took care that, between the promise given to Abraham and Isaac and the law, there should elapse a period of more than four centuries. Had He given the law a short time after, they might have said it was all one and the same thing. But how could this be thought, seeing that four hundred and thirty years passed between? The promise has its own special object,

and the law its design also; and we are not to mingle the two things together. Not that we are to set aside either. On the contrary, I maintain that no man has a right value for the promises of God who could despise His law. I own the exceeding value of the law; but what is its object? This we have here, and are not left to our own conjectures. The covenant of the law, that came in four hundred and thirty years after the giving of the promise to Abraham, cannot disannul what God had said before. If a man in holding out a reward annexes a condition, it is all fair. But supposing you said to another, I intend to leave you my house and garden, without adding any condition; if, after a year or two, you should say to the man, You must pay me a thousand pounds for the house and garden, he might answer, What do you mean? Do you repent of your promise? You gave the property to me unconditionally, and now you call upon me for payment! There was God's absolute promise to Abraham; this must ever remain untouched. But four hundred and thirty years after conditions come in. "If ye will obey my voice indeed,..... then ye shall be," etc. Then it was, God made the blessing to depend upon obedience. Is it, then, that God sets one principle against another? In no wise. He permitted the lapse of time, among other things, to show that the two things are perfectly distinct, as their object also. Therefore, as the apostle reasons here, the principle of condition that came in with the law cannot disannul that of grace, which came in with the promise. When God said to Abraham, "I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession," He did not add, If you will do so and so. The Lord was to give him certain blessings there, which depended entirely upon the goodness and undeserved favour of God. This was the way of God in

the promises. But in the law all hinged on its observance by him who was put under it. The voice of the law is for the righteous a blessing, and for the guilty a curse. “The man that doeth these things shall live in them.” “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the law to do them.”

The apostle next proves that, if the inheritance “be of the law, it is no more of promise.” If a man possesses a thing through something he has given or done for it, it is no more of promise, but what he deserves. It is like a person doing so much work for so much wages. Of course, if a master makes his servant a present, the man is thankful for it; but where it is only an equivalent for positive work done, it is clearly a matter of debt, and not of gift. The law is the principle of what is due, if there could be such a thing found among men; but all that was deserved was a curse, because man was a sinner. “But God gave it to Abraham by promise,” not by the law. Then comes the question, What is the good of the law? If God meant to give the inheritance by promise, why bring in the law? As this is a most Important question, I would call attention particularly to it. If you examine the dealings of God with His people in early days, God promises them a blessing, and they take it from God without looking at themselves to see whether they deserve it or not. This unquestioning confidence is all very blessed; but it is not for a man’s good not to know what he is. It is of great moment that I should learn what my state really is. Now the object of the law was to bring out the sinner’s true condition of soul; not at all to bring him into blessing, but to bring out the fearful ruin into which man had fallen by sin. The law was not meant to be the rule of life; indeed, it is rather the rule of

death. If a man had no such thing as sin, it might be the rule of life; but he being a sinner, it is an absurd misnomer to call it the rule of life.

“Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions.” It is not said, Because of sins. God never would do anything to make a man a sinner — but “it was added because of transgressions.” What is the difference? Sin is in every child of Adam; sin was in man before the law, as much as after. When the whole world was corrupt — when all flesh became so violent — that God was obliged to judge it by the flood, it is too clear that they were all sinners. After God gave the law to Israel, they were no longer merely sinners, but became transgressors. Rebels against God’s authority, they became the actual violators of His law. The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient. And whoever was made righteous by the law? Is he an honest man who merely refrains from taking your watch for fear of being transported? The only really honest person is he who has the fear of God before his eyes. The law has the effect of punishing those that break it; but it is not what makes a man honest, even in a human sense, still less in the divine. Through the faith of Christ one becomes a new man, the possessor of a new nature which is dependent and obedient, loving to do the will of God, because He wishes it, and not merely through dread of going to hell. It is quite right to have the consciousness that we deserve hell; but were this the source of the motive for obeying, is such an one really converted?

Here, then, we have the law’s object: it is to prove that men were sinners by bringing out the fact that those under the law broke it and earned its curse. “The law

entered that the offence might abound" — not exactly that sin might abound. God could never do this; but men being already sinners, the law by its very holiness provoked the sin so as to make it manifest to themselves and to all. The children of Israel were sinners like all others; but they would not acknowledge their sin, and therefore God brought in the law by Moses. Before the ten words, they might have said, We do not see the evil of worshipping images, or of not keeping the Sabbath day. The law was enough to leave an Israelite without excuse. And therefore, as the Apostle insists, "It was not made for a righteous man," though this is what people apply it to in our days; that is, for a rule of life. But then, besides justifying the believer, Christ is the means of making him righteous and keeping him so, or restoring the soul; there is no other efficacious way. Just as Christ is the life and the truth, so is He the way. There is no path nor power of righteousness and holiness but Christ revealed by the Holy Ghost. If you take the law as well as Christ, you become at least half a Jew. We are called to look at Christ, and Christ only, (2 Cor. 3,) as the one who creates, and fashions, and constitutes every particle of righteousness that the Christian possesses. So the apostle prays that they might be more and more "filled with the fruits of righteousness," etc. The natural man would allow the need of the works of righteousness which are demanded by the law; but he knows nothing of those "fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God." The law was the rule of death for a sinner; Christ is the rule of life for a saint. "Wherefore then serveth the law?" Everyone ought to admit both the end and the limits here set forth. The law "was added because of transgressions, till the seed (i.e., Christ) should come to whom the promise

was made." God was pleased to use this platform negatively, at any rate for a time; but now the seed is come, and the platform is gone for the Christian. It is all-important for convicting the sinner, the standard of what a sinful man ought to do for God. But it is neither the reflection of God nor the pattern for the saints: Christ is both, and Christ only.

Besides, "it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." This is to show the contrast with the promise, which was direct and immediate between God and man, without the intervention of angels or any mere creature daysman. In the case of the law, creature mediation is prominent. Hence the immense superiority of the promises as con pared with the law. All showed distance between God and the people. But in the promises, God comes, speaks, works personally and in dove. He has as directly to do with every converted soul as He had with Abraham: nay, now that redemption has been effected and Christ is risen, we have to do with God in a still nearer way.

"Now," he adds, "a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one." Under the law you have God and man as the two contracting parties, and you have also a mediator between the two. Moses stood thus between God and men, and what is the result? God's part was safe and sound, but man broke down. And so it was, is, and must be; and this not from any fault in the law, but from man's guilt and evil. The law is like a bridge that may be ever so strong, but, resting, at one end, on no foundation. There can be but one issue. So with man's trial under law. The law does not depend upon God alone, save as exacting; but, thanks be to God, the promise does. Under law, man is, in one sense, the chief

actor. He is rendering to God, not God to him. Whereas, when God promised the land to Abraham, He did not say, It must depend upon what you do. It was His own free, absolute gift. In the law there are two parties, and the whole thing comes to pieces, because man is the one on whom practically all turns; and what is he to be accounted of? In promise there is but one party, and there can be no break-down, because God cannot fail or lie: His promise must be accomplished. This then is the apostle's conclusive reasoning, "a mediator is not a mediator of one;" that is, where legal mediation is required, there must necessarily be two concerned, one of whom is the sinner, and so all is lost. "But God is one." Such is the character and the strength of promise. God stands alone, brings about all He says, and the believer has only to give thanks, enjoy the blessing, and seek to walk worthily and consistently with it.

"Is the law, then, against the promises of God? God forbid; for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin." There the children of Israel were, and the law had locked them all up together under sin. And this, "that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Not to the Jews, as such, but "to them that believe." "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster unto Christ." "To bring us" has no business here. The meaning is that the law was a schoolmaster dealing with these Jews, until Christ came; as it was said before, "It was added because of transgression till the seed should come to whom the

promise was made." It is not a question of bringing people now to Christ: the effect of the law is rather to minister death and condemnation, as we are so clearly told elsewhere. God may let people thus come under sentence of death, and afterwards by Christ bring them out of it; but no man can say that a killing power is in itself the means of bringing people to Christ. "The law was our schoolmaster." It did the office of the slave who had the charge of children under age. It dealt severely with those under it till Christ came. The Galatians were Gentiles who had never been under the law, to whom Paul is describing the manner of God's dealings with the Jews that were. Speaking of such he says, "The law was our [not, your] schoolmaster unto Christ." When Christ came there was a new object manifested, and the negative process of legal discipline closed, "that we might be justified by faith." The law made souls feel their state; but God opened their eyes when in that state to see that the only hope of righteousness was in Christ. "But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." Not even Jews who believed were any longer under the law! The moment they had Christ revealed, they passed from the dominion of the law and owed their new subjection to Christ. Christ is the Master and Lord of the Christian. The Jew had had the law for his tutor. When he received Christ, the law's office terminated, and he entered a new domain altogether.

Observe the remarkable change from verse 26. It is no longer "we," but "ye." "For ye are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus." Now he is addressing the Galatians, who had, of course, been sinners of the Gentiles, and yet they enjoyed the nearness of sons of God. You, be implies, are brought into this high

relationship by faith in Christ Jesus, without the intervention of the law, which, after all, deals with bondmen, or at least treats its subjects as if they were slaves. Paul did not preach the law first and Christ afterwards, but rather “Jesus and the resurrection.” This was the sum nod substance of his preaching; and these Galatians had at first received it accordingly. They were all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus — Gentiles as well as Jews.

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” The great point of the whole argument was, that the seed was risen, the seed Isaac, after he had been appointed to die, and actually under the knife, but now risen from the dead in figure, to show that this is the condition into which we Gentiles are admitted as having to do with Christ. Was Christ under the law when He rose from the dead? Nothing of the kind. So, says the apostle, it is with us Christians now. You have nothing to do with the Jewish schoolmaster. Faith has come in alike for us, and for you Gentiles; you have become sons of God without passing under the law at all. “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Do you not know what your baptism meant? What does a man confess when he is baptized? That he belongs to a Saviour who died and rose again. “So many of us as were baptized unto Jesus Christ (says our apostle elsewhere) were baptized unto His death.” And the death of Christ is that which for ever dissolves even a Jew’s connection with the law. Up to death, the law had a righteous claim upon the Jew, but the moment he confessed Jesus dead and risen, even he at once passed out of it into a wholly new condition. With a Saviour who is risen from the dead as his life and

Lord, his business is to walk as a man that is united to Him: the connection is broken with the old husband, and he belongs to another. Were he to attempt to have Christ and law together afterwards, it would be like a woman having two husbands; that is, spiritual adultery. The effect of it, too, is most palpable. Who has not seen a Christian one day joyous, the next day very much cast down in spirit, not sure whether he have eternal life or not; trembling at the thought of the Lord's coming; and yet that same man admiring, loving, adoring Christ? How comes this? He knows not death to the law. No wonder, then, he is in a miserable plight. The law presses him to death, and Christ is only known enough to keep his head above water, but with constant tendency to fall under it. How good for his soul to learn that God has broken all such ties by the death of Christ! My very baptism is the confession that, even had I been a Jew, I am dead to the law — "being dead to that wherein we were held." "Wherefore ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead." Of course, if dead to the law, it would be a most unhappy state not to be married to another. How great would be the danger of thinking oneself at liberty to do what one liked! But if belonging to Christ, then come the new feelings of one who is thus near to Him. Now, I belong to Him, and I am to do what He likes; our husband gives us liberty to do His will, not to do our own — "to bring forth fruit unto God." This is what baptism sets forth in a Christian; it is the confession of the death and resurrection of Christ. The believer should know, then, that he has done with the law, and is called to live unto God. "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" — not the law, but Christ.

The object of the whole is to show that, important as the law was for bringing people's transgressions plainly before them, yet now that a Christian has Christ, he has already confessed his sins, and has to do with another state of things altogether. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female. He takes up the grand distinctions of men naturally, and shows that these things did not characterise them as Christians. That which alone stamps me as such, is that I have Christ, and have put on Christ. "For ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." That is to say, they had not to pass under circumcision, or any other rite of the law, in order to get the promises. The Holy Ghost brings into these promises by having Christ. If you are striving to gain them by the law, you lose them; if you receive Christ, they are assuredly yours. He is the true seed of Abraham, and, having Christ, I have all the promises of God. "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God by us." Thus, you see, he is giving the final touch to the great argument of the Holy Ghost throughout the whole passage: that the Gentile believer has nothing whatever to do with the law as a means of blessing from God; that he may use the law as a weapon against the ungodly, but that in Christ he has done with the question of law — has emerged definitely out of it all, and now he is in Christ. And if I am there, I have all that Christ can give. The point is, to give all the glory to Christ. The force of the passage must strike any thoughtful mind in looking round upon the present time. The evil against which Paul was warning them has now become overwhelming. In one shape or another the law is mingled with Christ; and

therein you have poor Christians endeavouring to keep the two husbands at the same time. It is not something that we merely describe about others, but most of us know it from experience. We have proved both its misery and the blessing of deliverance from it. And may God be pleased to vouchsafe the same deliverance to every child of His who has tasted as yet only the misery and not the deliverance.

Galatians 4

We have already reviewed the admirable contrast the Holy Ghost has given, in the latter part of the previous chapter, between the promises and the law, showing their entire distinctness, not only in date and circumstances, but also principle, character, and purpose. In this, of course, they agree, that both came from God. But, then, the object for which God gave them was as dissimilar as possible. His promises were the fruit of His own love — His purpose to bless, His joy in blessing, and this not Jews only, but Gentiles. And we have seen that particular stress was laid upon those promises which were made to Abraham first, and then to Isaac, in which the Gentiles were expressly to be blest of God. The remarkable fact the Holy Ghost takes up is, that where there is unqualified promise of blessing to the Gentiles, there is no reference to the numerous seed of Abraham, so frequently mentioned in Scripture; but where the seed as numerous as the stars or the sand, is spoken of, the Jews are meant. And when we examine still more closely, we shall find that the time when the “one seed” meets us, was after the type of death and resurrection had been gone through in the person of Isaac (Gen. 22): emblem of Christ who, risen, lets in the

Gentiles to the full blessing of God apart from the law. And I am persuaded that this is so little understood that it will not be in vain just to give this slight passing notice now, in addition to what has already come before us. There is no one part of foundation truth on which Christians are generally feebler than in their apprehension of the place into which the resurrection of Christ brings the believer. It is the death of Christ that terminates all our questions. If it were our own death, it would, as judgment, be ruinous; but the death of Christ has precisely as much, yea, infinitely greater, efficacy in the way of grace. And Christ rising into a new condition, where there is no possible condemnation, the believer passes, before God into the same sphere. The power of God in the death of Christ puts away evil; the power of His resurrection brings us into the good of which He is the centre and the head. In this fourth chapter the apostle takes up another subject. If the law and promises were opposite in their nature — not contradictory, but totally different in scope and object — what was the, state of the believer under the Old Testament? It is answered in the beginning of Galatians 4, and this particularly with a view to the condition in which any of the Jewish believers had been, and what their present relationship to God is in virtue of redemption.

“Now, I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant though he be lord of all.” This is a principle true of believers under what we may call the old covenant. They were heirs, no doubt, and blessing is to be their portion; but the heir is no more than the bondman or slave, as long as he is, an “infant,” which is the force of the word “child” — the

word that was used among the ancients, as our legal term is still, for a person who is under a legal age, and incapable of entering into contracts and engagements or of acting for himself. That was precisely the position of an elder under the law. He was not arrived at full age; he was really an heir, destined to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There was no difference as to this. Conversion and regeneration are the same in all times and dispensations. There may be greater fulness, simplicity, and joy now; but as to the substance of the thing, even from the fall, before the flood and after it, either with law or without it, the heir was in truth lord of all. He really is to have a part in the kingdom of Christ, to reign with Christ; but if we enquire into his condition while he is in this world, we have it here described as servantship. God's purpose is, that when glory comes, he shall have a bright, blessed place; but while in this world he was an infant, "under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the father:" the first word, I suppose, referring to the person, the other to his possessions. He is under these till the time appointed of the Father. "Even so we, when we were children," — he applies it particularly to what they had been as Jewish believers — "were in bondage (servitude) under the elements of the world: but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

Nothing can be clearer than this. All is adjusted with divine perspicuity and force. The blessing of the Old Testament saint is in view, or of one who knew Christ in the days of His flesh, because there was no substantial difference between them: Peter, James, and John, all

were then infants. It was true, Christ was present in person, and there was an immense accession of blessing; their eyes saw, their ears heard, what prophets and kings had desired to see. Nevertheless, they were still infants; they were not delivered from the law; they were as yet kept bound down by its injunctions and ordinances; and the terror arising from it always kept them in a measure of uncertainty and darkness; and it ought to have been so. A man under the law was not entitled to be thoroughly happy. If I have to do with the law at all, I ought to feel the law: if I am conscious of having failed under it, I ought to have the pressure of its condemnation on my spirit. It was so with the saints under the old covenant. They were under bondage, because they were under tutors and governors. “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” It was quite necessary that Christ should be a man and a Jew. If He had not been a man, there could have been no basis for meeting any child of Adam, under any circumstances; and if He had not been a Jew, where had been the law or the promises either? But being both, now comes in an infinitely greater thing — redemption. He came as a man and under the law, but the object was, that He might redeem them that were under the law. God had chosen to put the Jew in a special place for particular purposes; and the issue of that experiment was that the Jews brought greater dishonour on the name of God than even the “sinners of the Gentiles.” We know that, if ever there was a people bent on destroying themselves, and forsaking their own mercies, it was Israel. If there was an idol among the Gentiles, they took the pattern of it;

and King Ahaz even went so far as to command that all the offerings were to be offered upon the altar that he had devised after the pattern of the heathen one that he had seen at Damascus, thus insulting the altar of God. The great crime for which Israel were carried away at the last was, that they set up the golden calves. In Jerusalem, in the temple, the Jews re-enacted the old sin, for which God had smitten them in the wilderness. They were unfaithful to God, but they stuck to idolatry as a heritage too precious to give up. The Jews, who had been called out to be the special witness of God against image-worship, were not satisfied with following idols of their own, but must adopt those of their heathen neighbours around them — and God swept them away. Hence it is that we read in Kings and Chronicles of the sin of Jeroboam, wherewith he made Israel to sin. That was the one thing which God had in remembrance. All sorts of new dynasties were continually arising in Israel; but no matter what, if it was only a man reigning for a month, it was always the same uniform sin, the sin of Jeroboam, that God bore in mind, and that most insulting of all idolatries, the golden calf. It was deliberate sin before His face: “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” So far we see what Israel was; and if we look at the prophecy of Jeremiah, we shall find God reproaching Judah, that backsliding Israel had justified herself in the presence of Judah, because Judah was far more guilty.

But we must not confine this tale of evil to Israel; we must read the Bible as a lesson of the heart, the lesson of what man is to God. And when we hear of Israel and Judah, let us apply it to ourselves. This is what God shows me that I am; this is the kind of stuff that my

heart is composed of; this is what human nature does when God puts it to the proof. Idolatry, then, governed; and, as we know, calamity after calamity came upon His people. They were carried away captive into Babylon, and the remnant were afterwards brought out of captivity to receive the Son of God. When He came from heaven, it was in the fullest grace. Sin had entered in by the woman, and here we have the Saviour. And the law having brought in what was crushing to the hopes of the sinner, Christ comes, made of a woman, made under the law; but it was to redeem them that were under the law. The mere keeping of the law could not have redeemed any one: it was essential to the vindication of God that the Lord should show He was perfect man under the law, perfect Son of man, perfect Israelite, perfect Son of God above law — in all things perfect. But whatever might be His glory, and whatever He might come down into, the end of all was redemption — by Him to redeem them that were under the law. God was waiting that He might bring them into the place that He intended His people to have. It was no pleasure for God to see children trembling. He was waiting for the blessed moment when Christ's death would give the righteous title to deliver His people from that condition, to bring them into a new state of things, when the bond of the law would be for ever broken by the death of Jesus the Son of God. And so it was, He therefore redeemed them that were under the law.

And here comes out another thing. No negative deliverance will ever satisfy God. It was "to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." But even that does not satisfy Him; for there might still have been the thought that the

adoption of sons was only for the believers in Israel — that this was what they were brought into now. But the apostle turns round to the Gentiles, and says, “And because ye are sons,” changing the person, and addressing the Galatians in a very pointed manner. “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” Here we learn most clearly that the Jew by the law only got into a position of bondage: that was all the law could do for him. It was impossible that it could be otherwise. Law could condemn what was. wrong, and no more. But now Christ came, and in Christ there is power to deliver, and this is what ruined man wants. There is delivering power, and God introduces it in Christ. “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son.” It was God Himself, introducing this blessed work indeed it is what He delights in. When the law was introduced, though God gave it, yet He simply says, “it was ordained by angels.” He merely puts servants to the work, comparatively distant servants, who never had the link of life and the Spirit, the link of Christ Himself, which we have. Angels may be holy, but an angel never rises out of the condition of servant; they are even servants of the saints, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. But now, when we come to hear of redemption, God is made most evidently and thoroughly the source of it. “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons And because ye are sons, (ye Gentiles,)” etc. Of course, believing Gentiles along are meant, but without any question of our being put under the law, without the least thought of putting us under the disciplinary process which the Jews had known.

The Jewish believer had been in the condition of an infant, a bondman under the law; the Gentile never was. It is true he was a bondman, but of a totally different character. His bondage was to idolatry; the Jew's bondage was to the law. The one, therefore, was under that which, in itself, was intrinsically good, but destructive to him; the other was under bondage to that which was of Satan, and had nothing which linked him to God. The more religious the Gentile was, the more thoroughly was he the slave of Satan. We shall find the force of that shortly. In the case of the Jews, they had been under this system of guardians and stewards: they had known what it was, though really believers, to be only at a distance, far from God' unable to draw near to God and pour out their hearts before Him as children. They were able to cry to Him, to groan to Him: that is what you have in the Psalms, which are full of this blessed confidence in God; but it is the confidence of servants who count upon God to interfere for them, who hope in God, but who are not able to praise Him yet — they are not brought near to Him. Even in some of the brightest of the Psalms they pray that God's anger may not burn against them for ever. They do not know that it is entirely put away for them. On the other hand, they enter into the judicial feelings of God against His enemies: they look forward, as if it were a privilege to put down the enemies of God, and ask Him to make them as stubble before the wind — to use them and their dogs that they might drink the blood of enemies — to us a thought full of the most painful associations which all Christians would turn from. Many are even in danger of condemning the word of God because such desires are in it. The language is exactly suited to souls under the law; but now are we under grace, and no longer under

law, and we pray for persons that despitefully use us and persecute us; whereas the whole tone of the Psalms, where they speak of the happiness of dashing the children of Babylon against the stone, is anything but returning good for evil: it is evil meeting with its just doom. I maintain that every word in the Psalms is of God — that all these imprecations are divine. Each curse, threat, and warning, all this sympathy with divine retribution, is as much from God as the Christian's now interceding for his enemies; but they are not suited to the same time nor the same persons, nor is God accomplishing the same end. As long as God carries on the day of grace, all these things are entirely inapplicable. They are not what God is bringing out now. They remain true for ever, each always in itself a right thing. But the fact is, that God has now, in Christ, brought in full, sovereign grace; and therefore God puts those who belong to Christ in a position to show forth, not earthly righteousness, but heavenly grace. Righteous rule is in reserve, and yet to be accomplished to the letter; and God will use His people Israel to be the special instruments of executing these divine judgments.

Let us look at the Revelation. Righteous dealing appears after the Church is taken to heaven — after the twenty-four elders are enthroned and crowned before the throne, representing the heavenly redeemed that God is now calling out of Jews and Gentiles. God then begins to work upon His ancient people Israel, who understand and cry to God and ask Him, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Is not this the counterpart to the tone of the Psalms? Yet are they saints of God. But mark the consequence of confounding

these dispensations now. The Bible requires to be rightly divided. If you take up parts of Scripture and misapply them, one way or the other, you will be a workman that needs to be ashamed. Alas! how men pervert the Sermon on the Mount. They see certain words laid down by our Lord for His disciples; they find Him insisting that they were not to resist evil, not to return a blow for a blow, nor to use any earthly means for asserting their claims or vindicating them against personal violence, spoliation of their property, etc.; the very things men resent as an infringement of their right. Were a Christian to make out of this a code for all men now, what could be more contrary to the mind of God? It would be to attempt governing the world on principles of grace. If you experimented thus on men as they are, it would become a far more dreadful bear-garden than even in the times of the great Rebellion, when they tried to act out the retribution of the Psalmist. There. Christians were put under the spirit and principle of the law; but the attempt to put the world under that which was intended for the guidance of God's children would be still worse confusion. The knave and rogue would be pardoned and caressed, the thief allowed to help himself to as much more as he liked. Evidently such principles never would do for the world, neither were they intended for it. The uninstructed may cry out that this is to take away the Bible, or much of it, but it is a totally false alarm. It is only an effort to lead them to understand the Bible; to teach them the real meaning of its various parts.

The practical point is, that Gentiles, such as ourselves, have been taken clean out of all the condition of sin in which we were. We were not under law, but we were

under sin — in total insubjection to God — under every kind of evil. It might not be necessarily open, moral evil, but we lived to self, and lived without God, and that is a very gentle way of describing the condition in which all of us have been. These Galatians were under the grossest forms of ignorance and idolatry; but such is the spirit of grace, that they were taken quite out of it all, and, by faith in Christ, made sons of God, without passing through any intermediate steps. They repented, they received the Gospel, they became children of God. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father:" — the very word which He, the blessed One, in full communion with His Father, uttered. Think into what a place we are brought! That he who was but the day before a wretched, defiled, idolatrous Gentile, is empowered by the Holy Ghost to utter the same sweet expression of relationship — Father! What a place has God given His children now! And it comes out, not in speaking about the Jews, who were expressly said to be redeemed from under the law, and brought into sonship; but the Holy Ghost expands when He speaks about the Gentiles. There might have been the notion that the Gentile, as he had known nothing about the law, could not be brought into so blessed a place, all at once, as the believing Jew. But not so: the Jew had to be brought out, not merely of sin, but from the law. The Gentile had nothing but his sin to be brought out of; and therefore in him the work was done, if I may so say, far more simply. The Jew had to unlearn, the Gentile merely to learn. All that the Gentile had was mere corrupt nature, till he was converted, when he was brought at once under the shining of God's grace; whereas the Jew had to be brought out of the law,

and was hampered — perhaps fettered — by what still clung to him of the legal system.

Remember, that he who understands grace never weakens the law, which is a very great sin. The doctrine of faith establishes the law. If you think the Christian is under the law, and yet can be saved and happy, you really destroy the authority of the law. Jewish believers under the law never had the full peace and joy which the gospel now brings; and where you have souls now under the law in spirit, they may be saved, but they never have the full rest to which the work of Christ entitles them. The reason is most simple. Though they received Christ, they do not apply His work. If they did, they would see that one of the effects of redemption is to deliver a person — not from subjection to Christ, but to make him more than ever subject to the will of God, and yet not put under law. Therefore the apostle shows that what they were brought into is the place of sons. Now the position of the son is intelligent subjection to his Father: the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of His Son, teaches to cry, “Abba, Father;” but not to say longer, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” That is the cry forced out of the heart of one under the law, crying out in anguish of spirit, always having the sense that there is something to be delivered from; comforted a little sometimes, and then down under the pressure of the law. Whereas, where the fulness of blessing that God has given us in Christ is known, the heart is prompted by the Holy Ghost to cry, Abba, Father. The flesh is done with in the sight of God, and we are entitled to say that we have done with it ourselves. God cannot trust me, nor can I trust myself; but I know that I can trust God in His beloved Son, who

has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, so that there is perfect rest for the heart. The cry of the Spirit is Abba, Father; thus is the child of God led out into the proper language of relationship with God. Other people may admire His creation, may dwell upon the wonders of the heavens and earth; but the cry of the Spirit is Abba, Father; and you can feel it far more than you can express it. What is the gladness of dwelling upon the attributes of God, or the outward effects of His power, compared with the joy of the heart that feels divine relationship? Thus we have the Galatian saint here reminded of his relationship; it was the cry which the Holy Ghost produced; and suited to the relationship, into the consciousness of which he was brought out of his idolatry. For all depends upon this — the simplicity with which my soul receives the great truth that, as to all that I am, it was judged on the cross; and now there is a new man before God, and a new man before me — Christ risen from the deed; and I am entitled to say, that is the One in whom I stand before God. Can we cry anything else than “Abba, Father?”

But then there is a warning as well as a conclusion. The conclusion is, “Wherefore thou art no more A servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” Just as in Galatians 6, where he says, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.” The Holy Ghost then puts it to each individual’s soul — “considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” So, if God gives a warning that is individual, He gives a comfort, and this before it. “Wherefore,” it is said, as the result of all the reasonings, “thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through

Christ." Observe, it is not what they shall be; not that they are always infants in this world, and shall get their blessing in heaven, but "thou art no more a servant but a son." If you were a Jew, you would be the servant of the law. But now, no matter what you were, if you had been an idolater, you have passed, in receiving Christ, into the fulness of the blessing that is due from God to His beloved Son. God has no blessing too great for the heart that bows to Him — "if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." He enlarges the sphere: it is not merely heir of this or that, but heir of God. What God possesses, what God will have in the blessed day that is coming, He will share with His children. And that is the meaning of the last clause in Ephesians 1:18. See also Romans 8. Such and no less, is the place for which God destines us; He does not mean to keep anything back. As grace has been, so the glory will be, God's answer to the devil's insinuation in Eden.

Now for the warning. "Howbeit, then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods! But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God," etc. It is plain he means the Gentiles; he does not say, when we knew not God, because the Jews had a certain knowledge of God under the law; but "when ye knew not God" clearly is about the heathen. "How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" Weigh that expression well. There cannot be a more solemn statement as regards the present state of Christendom. What does he mean by saying that these Galatian saints were returning again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which they desired again to be in bondage? They must have been perfectly shocked.

Turning again to idolatry! How could this be? They might say, We are only taking up the principle of the law: do you call this the weak and beggarly elements? Why, says the apostle, when you were unconverted, you worshipped false gods — idols; but if you, Christians, go and take up Jewish principles, even these feast-days or other principles of the law, you are in principle idolaters, turning back again to that idolatry out of which God delivered you. How is this? The reason is plain. It was not that the law in itself could be idolatrous, or that God did not forbear toward the prejudice of those that were Jews. But here were the Gentile believers resorting to these legal elements. Who told them? These things had lost all their meaning, and a Gentile had nothing to do with them; they had their value as a shadow of Christ, before Christ came; but to turn back from Christ risen from the dead, to these mere shadows, was in God's sight going back to idolatry. Whenever professing Christendom takes up the law, with its external ceremonials and shadows, (quite right as all this was under the law,) and adopts them as christian worship, it has unconsciously but really fallen into idolatry.

Supposing a person were to say, I find myself very cold in worshipping God, and I want something to arouse my soul; what more proper than to have a picture of my Saviour, that as I look upon Him and the crown of thorns, I may feel more deeply His love, and have my heart's affections more drawn out to Him? That is idolatry now, if it would not have been so at any time. But there were certain of these things allowed under the legal system, because of the hardness of their heart; they had sacrifices of beasts and an earthly priesthood; but for a Gentile to turn to these things is going back to

idolatry in the sight of God. The Holy Ghost presses this upon these Galatian believers, for the evil was only in the germ. If this be true, what a sin to take part in, to countenance or sanction, in any way, that which is idolatry in God's judgment! The evil is increasing most rapidly. It is not confined now to popery; but the stride which has been made of late years towards Catholic principles is the same thing. If it has any religious element at all, it is an idolatrous one, making use of certain feelings of awe in our fallen nature to make people feel more reverent in worship. That is precisely the thing that is opposed to faith. The essence of our blessing lies in the soul's enjoying Christ by the word of God — the Holy Ghost giving this enjoyment of Christ apart from everything that acts upon the natural eye or mind. For it is precisely this very abuse that the apostle here so strongly denounces, and which he calls the weak and beggarly element. What God prizes in worship would now be generally considered meagre and poor; for it supposes the absence of outward decoration and of excitement, in order that it may be the real power of the Holy Ghost acting among the saints.

"Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years." Not to do this now is the wonder. Alas! the Galatian evil is thought a proof of religion. He marks this observance, not merely as an error, but as a proof of idolatry. In heathenism these festivals were of great account; and God permitted them in Judaism because the Jews had a means of religion suited to their state and the worldly sanctuary. But now all is completely changed, and the observance of special feasts and seasons as a means of pleasing God is put down with a high hand by the Holy Spirit. "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you

labour in vain.” Is it not most solemn, that, whatever might have been the evil of the Corinthians, he never says of them, “I am afraid of you?” Had we known an assembly with so much flagrant moral evil in its midst — some, too, seeking to overthrow the resurrection, — should we not have said, there never was so pitiable a thing as their state? But the apostle writes to them in confidence, that they would be brought out of their evil. Not but that he deeply felt it, and puts before them their critical condition; but he writes to them, assured that God would touch their hearts. “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son.” And then he begins to deal with their conduct after he teas touched that great chord in their hearts. But when he writes to the Galatians, there is no such expression. Afterwards the Holy Ghost gives him comfort about them, but it is far short of what he feels in writing to the Corinthians. Legalism is an insidious thing, because it looks fair. When this is the case, men fancy that they become practically more holy; but the contrary is the fact. What produces true holiness is, that it is not merely the name of a day, or of an hour, or of a season, or place, but God working in the soul, both to will and to do of His good pleasure; and this, because “sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ.” God brings the believer into His own presence, and puts him there as a child.

Persons may be really breathing the very life-breath of popery who think that they have the most wholesome dread of it. Let us search and see for our own souls. We can always look up to God and count upon victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Let Satan rage as he will,

yet God will always be God — will always be true to His own word and Spirit.

The apostle now turns to his own relations with the Galatian saints; and the very reproach which the legal teachers had been inciting them to against himself, he takes as an additional ground for the truth. They, by their representations, had stirred up the Galatians to feel aggrieved with the apostle, because he had, as it were, ceased to be a Jew, avowing that he had completely done with the law. This is now met. It is important to understand how the law is thus done with. It was not that the apostle did not use it; but then the point is, as he tells Timothy, that a man should use it lawfully, for dealing with the ungodly, the unrighteous, etc. But they found fault with him, because he did not stand up for his Jewish privileges. He could and did use the law of God for moral principles and for dealing with men; but neither as a title nor a rule for himself. It would have been lowering his ground and character of blessing, had he condescended to speak about anything that belonged to him after the flesh. Grace had brought him into a far better place. In man the law and the flesh always go together. The cross of Christ was the end of both in the sight of God. The flesh was judged and condemned there; it was treated as a dead thing before God — dead and buried: and the law which deals with the flesh we are dead to. We have passed out of both, we are not in the flesh, and are no longer under law. The flesh being that in us with which the law grapples, and the flesh being now by faith accounted a dead thing, there is no more for the law to lay hold of. We pass out of its province into another country and atmosphere.

The apostle accordingly seizes this very reproach and turns it into an unexpected argument for the gospel. “Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am:” that is, be free from the law, as being dead to it in Christ; take your place boldly and with firmness, with the certainty that the will of God is that you have no direct relationship to it. “Be as I am.” I am free from its tenure and obligations. They say that I do not assert my legal rights as a Jew; I know and proclaim it. You were Gentiles after the flesh; you were never in a Jewish position at all: do not seek it now that you have, by and in grace, a better. “Be as I am; for I am as ye are.” You are Gentiles, and have never been, and are not, under the law at all, and “I am as ye are.” If you only understood your place of liberty from the law, how could you wish to pass under its yoke? This is put in a concise and highly elliptical form; but I believe it is to be understood by taking it in connection with what goes before and after. “Ye have not injured me at all.” They were apparently afraid that in letting the apostle know that he was foregoing his own proper place, they were doing something to pain his feelings. Not at all, he says: “Ye have not injured me at all.” I fully acknowledge that, whatever I was as a man in the flesh, I have entirely abandoned that ground. As a lineal descendent of Abraham, without a single evil thing, the law kept perfectly, I should not be so blessed as I am in Christ. Then, remembering what he said in Galatians 3:10, (“ as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse,”) we see that all which could be got by taking legal ground is a curse. Well, therefore, could the apostle triumphantly urge, “Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are.” You were only Gentiles and had nothing to say to the law; and now I am brought outside it as much as you — not, of course, by becoming

a Gentile, but by being delivered from law in and through Christ. There is the blessedness of the christian position. It is not merely absence of law, but the being brought into union with Christ, which raises us above the law, while it secures obedience and draws out love to God and man as the law never could. Thus, what the law aimed at is accomplished, (Rom. 8:3, 4,) and far more fully than it ever could otherwise have been, through the love of Christ constraining the soul. And this is done, not through the mere negative process of telling a man that he has not the law as his rule; but by putting him under Christ; (i.e., under grace.) This is what faith does for the soul.

“Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh, I preached the gospel to you at the first: and my temptation that was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.” So far from coming in anything that savoured of fleshly confidence and authority, he came as a suffering man. This is just alluded to here, but it is more particularly brought forward in 2 Corinthians 12. And very sweet it is to consider how it was, and when it was, that the apostle had this humiliating mark in his flesh. We are not told what it was. It might have been some peculiarity in his speech, look, etc. We know it was something connected with his bodily state: it was “in his flesh.” But it is quite clear, as it is affecting, to know, that the more the apostle was led on of God and blessed, only the deeper marks did he wear of suffering, weakness, and shame in his person. The thorn in the flesh followed his being taken up into the third heaven. This messenger of Satan buffeted him, and God turned it to excellent account, that the apostle might be kept low in his own

eyes, and even in those of others. It was thus made manifest, that what wrought such wonders in Paul was the power of the Holy Ghost, in spite of the sentence of death being passed upon all the energy of nature The day is coming when God will restore the Jews, and will put them in the position of “the head,” and the Gentiles of “the tail;” and then all will be established in due order according to the mind of God. But now, he, as it were, says, it is not so at all. Being a Jew is nothing It is all gone. I have come here as one suffering and despised, and in nothing asserting what I am as a child of Abraham. I am dead to it all; and as a proof, he refers to the well-known circumstances of his first preaching to them. Did they not remember that when he came to them, it was not with might or show, but deeply tried? Instead of outward attraction attached to his person, there was that which could not but be grievous trial to himself and to them. But what did they think of it then? They were so full of the gospel, so happy in finding the grace and the blessedness of the truth preached, that they regarded Paul as one would an angel. “Ye despised not, but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.”

“Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.” Their affections had been completely alienated! which is always the effect of false teachers working on the mind. The enmity grows, and every circumstance tends to swell it. The apostle presses this home urgently on their conscience. “Am I, therefore, become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? They zealously affect you, but not well. Yea, they would exclude you,” or us; for it

was really shutting out the apostle from the saints — making a barrier between him and them. “They would exclude US, that ye might affect them:” that is, that it might all be a matter of flattering one another; for the law is invariably perverted to the puffing up of the flesh, when it is not used recording to the purpose of God. “But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you” The experience of Paul with the Galatians was the exact opposite to what was found at Philippi. You may remember a well-known passage in Philippians 2 where the apostle speaks of them as having always “obeyed, not as in his presence only, but much more in his absence.” They were remarkable for their obedient spirit when he was present; and it is always the spirit of grace which produces this, as the law begets servility and fear. When we are happy in God’s presence, we are united in one common object, and that object is Christ. There is thus a motive that governs every affection and action; and happiness, peace, and submissiveness are the proper and natural effects of grace working among the children of God. let Philippi, then, they had always obeyed, not only when Paul was there, but much more in his absence. They were working out their own salvation with fear and trembling, conscious of the mighty conflict in which they were engaged. They did not allow the fond dream that, because they were Christians, all the difficulty was over; but, on the contrary, having been brought to Christ, they nevertheless found themselves in the presence of a powerful enemy, and hence they were thrown upon God. The apostle was gone, but instead of being cast down thereby, it made them look up to God more and more; not in any pride of heart, but in the felt need of dependence on Him. The same feeling of owning

God would have made them use and value the apostle when he was there; when he was not there, it threw them directly and immediately upon God. Whereas the pride of heart that would have despised the apostle, exposes one to self-idolatry, to such as flatter self, and so to every cheat of Satan. The great point for the Philippians was, that God wrought in them. Why be downcast, as if they had not the confidence that He who loved them best was working in them, and would care for them so much the more because they were engaged in such deadly strife?

With the Galatians it was not so. Taking advantage of the apostle's absence, they had soon fallen into a fleshly use of the law; and with teachers who humoured it, they were fast losing all real affection for him, and the blessedness they had once enjoyed. Although it would have been better that they should have looked up to God, and found strength to stand for Him when left alone, yet, considering the state in which they were, he could have wished to have been with them. Their faith had been shaken, and they were slipping from Christ, to make things more secure by ordinances; and as the apostle had gone through an immense deal about them in their first coming to the knowledge of Christ, — had known, as he expresses it himself, deep painful throes about it, so he went through all, in spirit, again now. "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." Legalism had so disfigured the truth in their souls, that they needed to be rooted and grounded in the first elements of grace over again. They had lost their hold of the cross, and the apostle stood in doubt of them. Outwardly they might be very zealous; but as far as testimony for Christ, and their souls'

enjoyment of Him, was concerned, all was gone. The apostle desired that the work should be renewed from the very beginning in their souls. “I desire to be present with you and to change my voice, for I stand in doubt of you.” The meaning is, he wished to deal with them according to what he found their condition called for. There might be an effect produced, and he would speak softly to them; or they might be light, proud, and hard, and then he must deal sternly: he would change his voice, as he says to the Corinthians: “What will ye? shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and the spirit of meekness?” Here the apostle was perplexed as to them.

“Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?” He uses the word “law” in two different senses in this verse. Ye that desire to be under the principle of law, do ye not hear what the books of the law say? That is, the early writings of the Bible. “Law” is sometimes said about the word of God in general as then revealed, as in Psalm 19, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” But when spoken of as that which the Christian is not under, it is the principle of the conscience being put under certain obligations, in order to acquire a standing with God. This is the fallacy which St. Paul is laying bare. Therefore, says he, “Ye that desire to be under law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free-woman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the free-woman was by promise.” There you see the connection between flesh and law, promise and grace. The Spirit has to do with the promise, the law with the flesh. This he illustrates from Genesis.

The Holy Ghost has taken particular pains to lay hold of facts in the Old Testament which we should never have thought applicable, in order to bring out blessed truths in the New Testament. Who would have discerned the difference between law and promise in Hagar and Ishmael striving with Sarah and Isaac? The Spirit of God not only saw it, but intended the record of the circumstances to be the beautiful foreshadowing of the two covenants; that of law, which has only a child of the flesh: and that of promise, which, on the contrary, brings forth in due time the child of the Spirit. The apostle does not leave us to our own imaginations. He shows that Hagar answers to Jerusalem that now is — the city of scribes and Pharisees, poor, proud, miserable Jerusalem, that had no liberty towards God, groaning under the Roman bondage, and the still more bitter slavery of sin. The apostle applies this to what was then going on among the Galatians. Let them beware of becoming virtually the children of Hagar. Did they not tale the place of being zealous for the law? Yet after all they did not understand its voice; “desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.” The law was thoroughly against them. It clearly showed that God attached the promise not to the mere offspring of the letter, but to the children of the Spirit.

Every religious system which takes its stand upon the law, invariably assumes a Jewish character. We need not look round far to understand this, nor to apply it. Why is it that men have magnificent buildings, or the splendour of ritual in the service of God? On what model is it founded? Certainly they are not like those who gathered together of old in the upper-room. The temple is clearly

the type, and along with this goes the having a peculiar sacred class of persons, the principle of the clergy being founded upon the notion of the Jewish priesthood. The service, where that is the case, must depend upon what would attract the senses — show of ornament, music, imposing ceremonies, everything that would strife man's mind, or that would draw a multitude together, not by the truth, but by something to be seen or heard that pleases nature. It is the order of what the word of God calls the "worldly sanctuary." Not that the tabernacle or temple had not a very important meaning before Christ came; but afterwards their shadowy character became apparent, and their temporary value was at an end, and the full truth and grace of God were manifested in the person of Him who came from heaven. When Christ was rejected from the earth and went back to heaven, all was changed, and the heart-allegiance of God's children is transferred to heaven. The true sanctuary for us is the name of Christ. What the Old Testament connected for an earthly people with the temple, the New Testament does with Jesus. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." If there were ever so few true to that, they would reap the blessing. It is of great importance to trace things to their principle. When the apostle wrote to the Galatians, only the germs were showing themselves; they had not got to the length of consecrated buildings and castes of men, with all the pomp and circumstance of religious worship suited to the world, which we see around us now, the result of the gradual inroads of error upon the Christian professing body. But still there was the beginning of the mischief, the attempt to bring in the principles of the law upon Christians. And what is the effect? You only fall into the position of Ishmael, out of Isaac's. To be thus

identified with the law is to be an Ishmael, to forfeit the promises and to become a mere child of the bond-woman. This is the argument that the apostle uses to deal with the Galatians, who were flattering themselves that they had made immense progress; but it was really a slip out of liberty into bondage.

“But Jerusalem, which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all.” The word “all” has been added to this verse. The true text ends with “us,” and obviously the sense is fuller and better without it. “All” was added, probably, by those who thought to strengthen the connection of all the children of God; whereas the inspired writer particularly refers to those that had been Jews. He says, We are no longer children of Jerusalem which is below, but we belong to Jerusalem which is above. As to the earthly Jerusalem, we owe her no allegiance now; we belong to Christ, and consequently to the heavenly Jerusalem. For it is written — and now he refers to a passage in the prophets — “Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not; for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband” The meaning may be a little obscure at first, but adds much, when understood, to the force of what the apostle insists on. It is connected not so much with Hagar and Sarah, as with the reference to Jerusalem. See Isaiah 54, where Jerusalem in a future day is looking back upon her past trials, and God makes a remarkable reckoning of grace. He. is speaking of the time when she was long desolate, of her present season of trial, when she is reft of all her outward privileges; but of that very time it says, she has more children than even when the Lord was her husband. In Hosea Israel is spoken of as one most guilty,

and the Lord about to put her away. Then she is the desolate one: the Lord has forsaken her because of her sin; but in due time, before there is any outward deliverance from under Gentile captivity or oppression, grace begins to work, and all those who are brought in under Christ now are counted in a certain respect her children. But all is connected with Jerusalem that is to be — Jerusalem that will have ceased to be Hagar and have taken the ground of grace. So that when she looks upon the Christians who will then be in their own heavenly place, the Lord will count them as children of the desolate wife. He will say, “Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not; for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.” It is a comparison of herself during her time of desolation with herself when she had a husband. The latter was the time when she was owned in her earthly standing, and she had few children then; but now, in her desolation, there is a mighty outpouring of God’s grace, and a wide ingathering of souls, who are counted, by grace, as her children.

The Epistle to the Galatians never takes up the standing of the Church properly, not going beyond the inheritance of promise. There are certain privileges that we share in common with every saint. Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. We too believe and are justified. Substantially, faith has so far the same blessings at all times. We are children of promise, entering into the. portion of faith as past saints have done before us; and this is what we find in Galatians, though with a certain advance of blessing for us. But if you look at Ephesians, the great point there is that God is bringing out wholly new and heavenly privileges. This

is in no respect what is taken up in Galatians. There we are ml the common ground of promises. "' If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." But in Ephesians there are certain distinct and superadded privileges that Abraham never thought nor heard of: I mean the formation of the Church of God, Christ's body, the truth that Jews and Gentiles. were to be taken out of earthly places, and made one with Christ in heaven. This was the mystery concerning Christ and the Church, hidden from ages and generations, but now revealed through the Holy Ghost. So that, in order to have a right view of the full blessing of the Christian, we must take the Ephesian blessing along with the Galatian. The special time is while Christ is on the right hand of God. Even as to the millennial saints, do you think they will enjoy all that we have now? Far from it. They will possess much that we do not, such as the manifested glory of Christ, exemption from sorrow and suffering, etc. But our calling is totally different and contrasted. It is to love Him whom we have not seen; to rejoice in the midst of tribulation and shame. If a man ware to form his thoughts of Christianity from Galatians only, he might confound the saints now with those of the Old Testament, always remembering the difference that we find here, that the heir as long as he is under age differs nothing from a servant; whereas we are brought into the full possession of our privileges. But there are other and higher things in Ephesians, called, or at least flowing from, the eternal purpose of God. So that it is well to distinguish this double truth — the community of blessing through all dispensations, and the speciality of privilege that attaches to those who are being called now by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

“Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But, as then, he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was horn after the Spirit, even so now.” There he shows the practical fruit; nevertheless, he adds, “What saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman.” What a death-blow to all who maintain that the child of God has anything to do with the law, as that which determines his own relationship to God! The law is a powerful weapon for probing the ungodly; but in our own standing we have done with it. “So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free.” Such is the conclusion of the apostle’s argument. And what could be more conclusive? Out of the law itself he contradicts all they were using the law for; and before the law was given at Sinai, we have, set forth in this remarkable type, the true position of the Christian in contrast with the legalist. The Jew answers to the child of the bond-woman, and was then in bondage too. The apostle shows that such is the inevitable portion of the Gentile also who desires to take that place, and who must suffer even more the consequences of his own folly in it. He is leaving freedom in order to be a slave. “But what saith the scripture? Cast out the bond-woman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman.” So that we have, in the clearest manner possible, God resisting all this attempt to foist in the law among the children of the free-woman. On the contrary, to the child of the free the promises are firmly bound by God Himself in Christ risen.

Thus, then, it is of the greatest importance that we should seize clearly our position, and understand what it

is that God has given us. He has called us, even had we been Jews, into another condition than subjection to the law. He has made us to be children of the. free-woman and brought us into liberty

Galatians 5

It is well to remark the different way in which the Holy Ghost brings out the liberty which the believer now enjoys. In John 8:32-36, it is attributed to the Son' and the Son of God acting by the truth; and both points of view in contradistinction to the law. The whole chapter, indeed, is most striking in this respect. For we have the case of a woman taken in adultery, in the very act; and man scrupling not to use this for selfish purposes: and, observe, religious man! He puts himself, as he might suppose, on God's side, to judge the, gravest, plainest, most positive guilt, and this without mercy and without self-judgment. Nay, further: he would turn the case of man's sin and shame, and God's law, not only to exalt himself and claim a righteousness which he has not, but to dishonour God's Son. Now this is the thesis of the chapter, and it has brought out triumphantly the glory of Christ. For He never came to sully the law. But then there was a glory that surpassed, and it was come — a glory before which the dignity of the law grew pale; and Christ showed it most clearly. Not that He uttered one word to lower the law, which indeed could not have been of God. But, nevertheless, He proved the utter powerlessness of the law to meet the sinner's case, save only in the way of a destruction which goes much farther than those who cite it expect. Law destroys the guilty hand that wields it, as well as him against whom it is aimed. It is two-edged in its character when Christ

speaks; and those were forced to feel its keenness most who appealed to it against the abashed adulteress. Not she, but they, retired in utter confusion from the presence of Christ, — but mark this — of Christ using the law! nay, not this; but Christ, as divine light, dealing with conscience. Nevertheless, He did most completely expose the folly and sin of their recourse to the law. He showed that one without sin could alone righteously throw the first stone. The law never had raised such a question. But Christ brings in a power and comprehensiveness and searching character which never had shone before; and which can be seen now only in and through Him. The law simply said, Thou shalt not do this; but this is not, “He that is without sin.” And who was the sinless? He alone who had not come to condemn. The law might denounce, but there was none to execute it. For had its sentence been carried out, they were all dead men — all left equally under the penalty, though from different ‘causes. They retire in hopeless confusion; and the woman was left in the presence of the Son, who shines with the word of God as light upon the soul.

In the whole chapter they who stood upon the law are manifested as the slaves of sin. They might boast about being children of Abraham, but they did not his works. And certainly Abraham, who did not even know that law of which they boasted, did know Christ’s day. He had seen the light of God, and rejoiced to see that day. So here, when proud, guilty man is banished from His presence, He meets one who was outwardly more guilty, and with nothing but mercy. This flows from His divine rights as Son of God, using the word of God and not the law. The law, on the contrary, always condemns and kills,

and can only put bondage on the soul. But it is Christ's prerogative, and Christ's only, to give true liberty. It is the Son who makes free. The liberty we get flows from His word. Hence it is through faith; because "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." These things always go together — the Son of God working by the word, and that received by faith into the soul.

But there is another point of view, which it is especially the Apostle Paul's to bring out, that Christ has wrought a work by virtue of which even those who were under the law are completely brought outside its domain; and those not previously under it, i.e., the Gentiles, are proved to sin against their own mercies, if in any way they pass under its yoke. To this the Apostle Paul has come in our epistle: "Stand fast," he says, "in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Bear in mind this, too, that, among the Galatians, the character of the bondage was not so much what is c ailed the moral law as the ceremonial. I am aware that many would think the latter much more serious shall the former. But, on the contrary, the Christian's subjection to the moral law argues a far deeper departure from the truth than if it were the ceremonial; because the ceremonial law, every Christian must feel, derives its whole meaning and value from being a type of Christ. Not so the ten words, which are not a type of Christ, but the direct demand upon the strength and righteousness of men' if he have any. And, therefore, one can understand a Christian's getting entangled with types and shadows. A reasoning mind might say, Is it possible to believe that circumcision, on which God insisted so much with Israel, is to be given up

now? If there were no value in it ever, why was it enjoined on Abraham's seed? And if it were so significant and obligatory then, why not now? Besides, does not Christ teach that it was not of Moses, but of the fathers?

All this might furnish a plausible platform for human feeling and argument; but the apostle was led of the Holy Ghost to deal with the question of introducing the thinnest wedge of the law. Take circumcision, the type of having our nature mortified: every believer has this verified in the death of Christ. But believers might have said, There ought to be the outward acknowledgment of it too: why not retain the rite which connects us with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! We are feeble and forgetful; why should we not keep up that which "the elders" prized so deeply, while we also enjoy the blessing that is new? But the apostle deals with it decisively in this epistle. Whatever the use to which God applied circumcision before Christ, it vanishes now. "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing" — that is, if you should be circumcised after this: it was not a question of those who had already been. But if they, as Christians, sought it, "Christ shall profit you nothing." He does not mean that, supposing any one had made the gross mistake of being circumcised, this could not be forgiven; but that, if they now passed through that ordinance as necessary to their complete justification, His efficacy was for them made void. Thus, not only is Christ a complete Saviour, but He is an exclusive one.

The attempt to add to Christ is in fact to destroy salvation by Christ.

This principle is very important; because you will find it is constantly the resource of ignorance to say, Well, we all hold the same thing to a certain degree; the only difference is, that I believe something more than you do. Yes, but that “something more” is to extinguish faith, and annul the worth of Christ. Bring in anything, no matter what, necessary to be done by you — necessary as a means of “being justified in the sight of God,” and I say unto you, warns the apostle, “Christ shall profit you nothing.” Nay, look at circumcision, which God once instituted with peculiar solemnity, threatening with death him who did not submit to it; and now see how that same God, having given Christ, puts a stop to it all. It had done its office; and now to bring it in again would be to obscure, dishonour, and even destroy the work of Christ. God had shown by it, in a figure, that the old man was to be treated as a vile and dead thing. But Christ is come; and there is not now a mere disciplinary process on the old man, but a “new creature;” and the idea of mixing up something done to the old, along with the new, as a means of justification, is most offensive to the Spirit of God. “Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing; for I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.” You may distinguish between the ceremonial part, that had such a blessed meaning, and the moral part, by which, you allow, man cannot be justified; but you know not what you do. You cannot separate circumcision from the law. God has embodied that rite so formally in the whole structure of the law, that though it had existed before, it became an

integral part since, and henceforth amalgamates so intimately that you cannot separate the rite from the entire system. If you acknowledge any portion of the ritual as that under which you are, you are responsible for the universal legal system; you are debtor to all its demands. And I would call your attention solemnly to this — “a debtor to do the whole law.”

Is not then every Christian thus a debtor? God forbid! It is false doctrine. If he were, he would be a lost man. I am aware there are those who do not understand this; who think that Christ, besides bringing pardon, is simply a means to strengthen them to keep the law. But this is sad and fundamental ignorance of Christianity. Is a Christian then at liberty to break the law? Still more loudly do I cry, God forbid! It is one thing to be a debtor to do the whole law, and another that God can make light of any breach of the law. Is there then nothing possible between these two conditions — debt to the law and freedom to break it? Neither consists with a Christian. He who is free to do his own will, is a lawless, wicked man. He who is under the law to do it, describes the proper condition of the Jew and nobody else. The Christian stands on an entirely different ground. He is saved by grace and is called to walk in grace; and the character of righteousness that God looks for in him is of another sort altogether; as it is said to the Philippians, “being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are” — not by the law, but — “by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God” — by Christ under grace and not under law. And this is not a question solely of justification. I am speaking now about the walk, about the responsibility of the Christian to do the will of God; and I say that Christ, not the law, is the measure of the

Christian's walk; which makes all the difference possible.

It may be said, Was not Christ under the law? Yes, assuredly, but He was above it too. The Christian, the Gentile, never was under it; and being set in Christ, now that he believes, he stands on other ground, to which the law does not apply. For this reason, every Christian (no matter who or what) is regarded by God as alive from the dead, to bring forth fruit unto God. The law only deals with a man as long as he lives; never after he is dead. "But ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." And that, it is remarkable, is not at all what is said of us, after a "second blessing," extreme unction, or any other step of imaginary perfection. We begin with it, and our baptism declares it. What this sets forth is Christ's death and resurrection. And if it has any meaning for me, it says that I am identified with Christ dead and risen. It is no longer the law dealing with me to try if it can get any good out of me. I have relinquished all by receiving Christ, and I take my stand upon Christ dead and risen again, and am baptized into His name, as one alive from the dead, to yield myself to God.

Nor is this some abstruse doctrine that ought to require deep acquaintance with the word of God. It is not hid away in some trope or figure of a hard book, but plainly set forth in the Epistle to the Romans, and this is the invariable doctrine. So, wherever you look, this is the foundation-truth of Christianity, that God has done with mere dealing with the flesh. He has another man, even a new man, Christ risen from the dead; and the Christian has received Him. This is practically what God has to make good in the heart of the Christian. "Walk ye in

him.” A young Christian may be cast down after receiving Christ, through the sense of evil he finds in himself. He wonders how this can be. He knows how Christ deserves to be served, and is conscious how little he serves Him as he ought: he is filled with sorrow about himself, and perhaps begins to doubt whether he be a Christian at all. He has not yet learnt his lesson. He has not mastered even what his baptism set forth, the value of having a Saviour who is dead and risen. He is occupied still with something of the old man; he looks at it and expects to get better, hoping that his heart will not have so many bad thoughts, etc., as he used to have; whereas the only strength of the Christian is being filled with Christ, with all that is lovely in Him before God. The saint, in proportion as he enjoys Christ, lives above himself. There is the exercise of that by virtue of which the Christian is said to be dead and risen — the new life which the Holy Ghost communicates to all who believe. Only the believer feels what is unlike Christ; but he rests in what Christ is to God, and this makes him happy. When he becomes engrossed with what takes place within him, he is cast down. It is not that he should not judge himself for what is contrary to Christ, but that he should treat it as vile and bad, as that which flows from man and not from Christ; and then, having confessed it to God, he should turn away resolutely from it to the Saviour. The believer has acquired the title in Christ not to be cast down because of what he finds within him; not to be disheartened, because there dwells no good thing in his flesh. Is not this what the revealed word of God tells him so constantly? And yet how many go on months and years, expecting some good thing to come out! I do not, of course, mean that they are not born of God; but they are so under the effect of old thoughts and notions,

acquired by catechisms, books of divinity, and sermons, that they do not enter into the full liberty wherewith Christ makes free.

Nothing can be plainer than the Holy Ghost's decision in the matter. He shows that the very smallest insisting on the law, in any shape, brings you in a debtor to do the whole of it; and if so, where are you before God? You are lost and hopeless, if you have a conscience. The question of the law generally comes up now as connected with sanctification. In the case of the Galatians, it came out strongly in the matter of justification. But the Christian has no more to do with it in one form than another. In verses 1-4 it is connected with justification. In the latter part of the chapter its link is with sanctification, which is the connection, and the only connection, in Romans 6, where justification is not touched upon, but only the believer's walk. As to this, he is not under law, but under grace. What a blessed thing it is to stand in this true grace of God! If I look at my salvation, it is all His grace; and if I think what is to give strength to my walk and service, it is just the same. Grace is the spring all through. God does not alter, now that He has revealed, the fulness of grace in Christ. Launched into that ocean, He will not go back into what had to do with exposing and scourging the old man, needful as the task was. Is He not rejoiced to have done with that which never wrought anything else, as far as mall was concerned, but the mere crushing of those that had a conscience, and an opportunity to make out a self-righteousness for those that had none; those, that were conscientious, groaning and miserable; and those that were not, full of themselves and of their fancied goodness? How sad, then, the departure warned of here! "Christ is become of

no effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." By these last words, he does not mean that they had slipped into immorality, or were openly gone from Christ. But they had joined the law along with Christ as a means of justification; and the moment you have done this, you have let slip the only principle on which God can possibly count you righteous. For God justifies sinners. What a glory of God! "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness."

How is it, then, one may ask, that any ungodly are not justified? Because they do not believe that God is as good as He is; because the gift of Christ is too great for them; because their confidence is in themselves, or at the least they have no confidence in God. And the reason why they have none is, from not believing what Christ is for the sinner. When I know His glory and His cross — that He has turned it all now into the scale of the poor soul who goes to Him because of his sins, then I see that it is impossible that God could not save him who stands in the same scale with Christ; and this is what the soul does that believes in Christ. He may he as light as a feather, but it is not his own weight that he depends on, but on what Christ is and Christ has done. God has confidence in the work of His Son, and he has; that is faith. A man is a believer who no longer trusts in his own works, nor in his own feelings, but in God's estimate of the cross of His Son, God being not only gracious but righteous in that very thing. I want to know that I have got through Christ that whereby God is glorified in thus blessing me. And therefore He is what He is — righteous in justifying my soul. If I have Christ, God is equally

righteous in justifying me, as He would be in condemning me if I had Him not. The righteousness of God that would condemn the sinner is the very thing that in Christ justifies the sinner, but, then, it also secures holiness. It is not merely a robe over him, but there is a new life as well; and I receive that new life in receiving Christ: in a word, we have justification of life in Him. And of what character is this life? Not the same as Adam's. That would not do, because Adam fell after he had life. But Christ laid down His life, that He might take it again in resurrection; and hence we never lose the life that He has given us — a life stamped with His victory over the grave: in fact, our life is Christ risen from the dead. No wonder, then, that it is everlasting, and that we can never perish. It is the life of One risen, over whom death has no more dominion. And such, consequently, is the position of the believer. Of course there may be the physical act of passing through death; but we are speaking about life before God communicated to the soul; and that life is the everlasting life of Christ, after He had put away our sins on the cross.

Accordingly, the apostle concludes the whole matter with, "We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." It is not that we, through the Spirit, are waiting to be justified, but "we, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." And what is this hope? It is the glory of Christ. We have the righteousness, but not yet the hope of it. We have Christ Himself, but the hope of righteousness is the hope that righteousness in Christ entitles me to. We have become the righteousness of God in Christ. But what is the hope of righteousness? It is the hope of the glory of God: as it

is said in Romans 5, “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 hope of the glory of God.” In the first verse is the righteousness, in the end of the second, the hope — “the hope of righteousness.” And what is that? That I shall be with Christ in the very same glory that He has. For this the believer is waiting. And meanwhile he has the Spirit of God, not merely to work in his soul, but that we through Him should wait for the hope of righteousness. We have not that hope seen and possessed yet; and therefore it is entirely a question of faith. But the Spirit of God who dwells in us gives us to know that, possessing the righteousness, being already justified, we shall have a hope suited to that righteousness. As we have the righteousness of God, we shall have the glory of God. So that nothing can be more blessed than the position in which the believer is set here by the apostle. The Galatians were hoping to be justified; but he says, You are justified already; and if you think to make things more sure by circumcision, you lose everything, and become debtors to do that which ensures only a curse: whereas “we, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.” We are waiting for glory — the hope of righteousness.

“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.” Now he shows, just passingly, that there is a very great reality in the believer’s moral condition. It is not only that he has justification, and a hope in character with it by and by; but the selfsame faith which makes him know that he is justified, and gives him also to be looking onward to the glory he is destined to, meanwhile

works by love, not by law. To this he is going to bring us, the question of practical sanctification; and he shows that the believer has no need of going under the law; because, if his faith works by love, it accomplishes that which the law sought, but never effected or received. He does not at all mean to say that, though the believer is thus justified and waiting for glory, there is nothing meanwhile operating in his soul. It is a mighty and influential thing; but, then, it works by love. Its origin and its rest are in God's love; it knows salvation springing from that love. The love of God shown in Christ fills the believer's heart. He has a hope that makes not ashamed. And why not? Because the love of God is shed abroad in his heart. And I take that love of God in its largest possible meaning first of all, as God's love to us; and next, as ours to Him. It is the fulness of the sense of God's love in us; and the effect is, that it enables us to love God and every one else. If persons are thoroughly happy themselves, they cannot help loving others.

This, then, is the principle upon which the believer stands — he is already justified; he is waiting for the glory; and meanwhile there is faith that worketh by love. Therefore it is no question of circumcision. We are Christians; and the whole basis of the law, therefore, and of these questions, is gone. How comes this to pass? For a very blessed reason. "For," says he, "in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." The first availed a good deal to the flesh, and there was an important lesson taught by it. But he speaks of what is "in Jesus Christ." That is the position of a Christian. He is not in the flesh: he once was. And "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" — an expression that shows as strongly as possible that we are not in the flesh now. Do you not understand this? If you tell a person that you were in the country once, it implies that you are not there now. So, when the apostle says, "when ye were in the flesh," he means that he was in the flesh before he knew Christ: but now he is in the flesh no more, though he has the flesh in him. God views us in another condition. We have the old nature, but we have got another nature, by virtue of which God says, "Ye are not in the flesh." When we were in the flesh, we were not delivered: we had not laid hold of Christ. But now that we are His, we are no longer in the flesh. We ought firmly to hold fast this truth, and to rejoice in it. If a person fails, that is the more reason why he should not yield to the further suggestions of the enemy. We ought always to hold fast to the truth that we are not in the flesh; the more especially as it is not for our own praise. On the contrary, it is the very thing that aggravates our sin, and that makes us the more ashamed of ourselves. If you are in the flesh, no wonder that you act after the flesh. But if you are not in the flesh, then be ashamed when you act as if you were. God presses upon us this blessedness, for the express purpose of making us feel more deeply our failure, if we do fail. We are not in the flesh, and therefore we ought never to give way to the flesh. But when we do, we should feel it, and confess it with humiliation before God, but not let go Christ nor His truth. This is true of every Christian; though I am aware that there are many Christians who would say that they could not receive a word of it — that it is all mysticism, etc.: but it is a comfort to think God says every word of it about them. They may not be able to

take the comfort of it for themselves; but what a blessed thing it is that Christians have to do with God, and not with themselves! This is the reason why they are not consumed. We prove ourselves to be just as weak and foolish as Jacob was, giving way to the flesh so often, and allowing our own spirit to work too; but we are, in a still higher sense, Israel. We have prevailed, because of Him in whom we are before God.

“Ye did run well. Who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.” He reproaches them with having listened to these false teachers, who had pressed circumcision. “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” Is it not solemn to find that the very word “leaven” which is used in 1 Corinthians to describe frightful mural corruption, in Galatians characterizes the introduction of the legal system among the children of God? God treats it as a most offensive thing. Indeed, the tone of the Holy Ghost in writing to the Galatians is even more severe than in addressing the Corinthians. Because, although the Corinthians were guilty of what was far more blameable in the sight of men, the Galatians had fallen into an error that struck more deeply at the foundations of God’s grace; and a spiritual man invariably judges sin, not by that which man thinks of it, but by what it is in the sight of God. Having brought out the character of it, he says, “I have confidence in you through the Lord that ye will be none otherwise minded.” He could not say that about all of them: he says it in a general way; and adds, “But he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.” He wants to separate them and give a sense of horror about those who had misled them. “Faith which worketh by love” does not hesitate to use strong

language about the corrupters of the Church of God — denounces them most earnestly, and as a duty to God and man. “I would they were even cut off which trouble you.” He that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.” There were several engaged in that bad work. “And I, brethren, if I preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution?” They had made the Apostle Paul to be a sort of evidence in their favour. They may have taken advantage of his circumcising Timothy, in order to make a show of inconsistency between his acts and his preaching. But St. Paul was not acting contrary to these principles when he circumcised Timothy. It was the elasticity of a man who could stop the mouths of objectors; and Paul, to silence Jewish slander, ended that question most unjewishly — by having Timothy circumcised. But he would not suffer it in the case of Titus, (who was a Greek,) whom he took up to Jerusalem with himself. This might appear capricious, but grace knows the time to be firm as well as to bend. There seems here to be an allusion to this, in his argument with the defenders of the law. It requires the wisdom of the Spirit of God giving one to know where one may use our liberty, or where it is a duty to stand as firm as a rock; and Paul did both. If Timothy had been circumcised, it was grace stopping mere fleshly questions, and not law, for his father was a Greek. But as to preaching it, such a thing was far from his mind. Had he ever pressed circumcision, he would have had their favour and countenance in every place that he visited. On the contrary, he was persecuted because he would not allow the flesh nor the title of circumcision.

The latter portion of the chapter takes up the other subject, namely, the law as ruling the walk. What we

have had already is the denial of circumcision and of law in every shape as entering into justification. Admit the principle of it in a single particular, and you are a debtor to do the whole law.

At this natural division the Spirit of God recurs to the thought of liberty with which He had opened the chapter. It is put forward in a twofold point of view. Liberty as a question of justification we had in the early part; liberty now we have as that which leads into, and ought always to be connected with, practical holiness. For we must remember that this is the subject-matter of the remainder of the chapter. Now there are many persons who more or less understand that Christ has brought us liberty in the matter of righteousness, or the standing of justified men in the sight of God; but they do not know liberty in the daily walk with God. And when I say “many,” I mean many Christians, or real saints. Practical holiness, in such cases, invariably suffers. Where there is, along with this, much conscience, it necessarily takes the legal form of ordinances, restraints, and the like. Or where souls have not the same internal exercises, it takes the shape of laxity to a greater or less extent: that is, they see that they are delivered by the grace of God, and they consider themselves free to use the world, and to allow, to no little a degree, the inclinations of nature; because, as they say, there is evil in the nature, and, as they suppose, God, in His tender mercy, makes allowance for it. Now both these things are totally wrong. One cause of all this mistake lies in the misapprehension of a very important truth — the effect of the presence of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. Yet, in the Acts: and Epistles, all the exhortations, the walk that is set forth,

the worship that the New Testament inculcates, the whole experience — in a word, of Christians that is there portrayed and insisted upon — everything is built upon the presence of the Holy Ghost. Where this is not entered into, the consequence is, that children of God must either suppose that there is a certain latitude allowed them by God, which is only another word foe indifference, or they must fall back upon the righteous curb that God has put upon our nature, and that is only another expression for the law of God. Now, the gospel supposes that, good and holy and perfect as the law of God is, it is entirely powerless either to justify or to sanctify. It cannot in any way make the old nature better; neither is it the rule of the new nature. The old man is not subject to it, and the new man does not need it. The new creature has another object before it, and another power that acts upon it, in order to produce what is lovely and acceptable to God — Christ the object, realized by the power of the Holy Ghost. And although, of course, the Spirit can use every bit of the word, (God forbid that I should say that God's righteous law was not brought within the range of the Spirit to turn to account!) I maintain that the law does not give the form, nor the measure, nor the character, any more than the power, of christian Holiness. It is a misunderstanding of God's design in giving it, and of its right present uses, to suppose the therein is the mould in which God now is fashioning the souls of the saints.

This is the subject that the apostle takes up and handles henceforward in our epistle. We have seen the question of justification entirely settled; now we have the walk or practical holiness. Again he insists upon liberty. We might suppose that he had said enough about it, after

having charged them to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage. But no. In the domain of holiness this liberty is needed, just as much as for justification; and therefore says he, “Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty.” That is, it characterizes our calling. Only, says he, it is not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, or you are not to use license: do not turn this liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. There he showed that there is a faith that works by love, (as said a few verses before;) so now he shows that the object of that love should be the helping one of another. It is not for the purpose of putting you under the law, but that you may serve one another” “for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Had they not been trying the law? And what had been the result? He says, You have been biting and devouring one another: that is not fulfilling law, but lusts. When persons talk about it, or desire to be its teachers, do they ever fulfil it? It begins with confident words, and ends without deed or truth. Whereas, on the contrary, when Christ is the object of the soul, though the law does not occupy the mind, yet is it fulfilled. Christ is the power of God; the law is the strength of sin. I have exactly the same word of God to tell me of Christ and the law; and both are in the same epistle. (1 Cor.) But it does not matter where the subject is entered into; the great point that the Holy Ghost insists on is, not that the law was not a good thing, but that, our nature being horribly bad, there never can be any good got from bringing the law to bear on our evil nature, save condemning it. The question is, What will strengthen my soul for what is good? The answer is, not the law, but Christ. The law, I admit, is

excellent. But you have been talking about the law as a means of walking well: what sort of holiness have you been producing? Biting and devouring one another! This is not love. But it is the effect of your use of the law you boast of. “But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” Such is the result. The law is a killing, destroying power; not because of its being bad, but because our nature is. And remember that the law beared upon our nature. The law was given not to the new man, but to the old.

There was the wisdom of God. Law was for the purpose of provoking the latent sin. But what is to give the new life strength, and draw out its affections? What is to nourish the new creature, and call it into lively exercise? Not the law. But he tells us more. He had shown that love is the sum and substance of the law. If, then, love prevails, the law is fulfilled; but among you, on the contrary, there is contention, strife, and every evil work. What a blow to their legally-engendered self-conceit! Now, going farther, he gives them a positive word. “This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.” The action of the Holy Ghost is not merely as a convincer of sin, nor as the energy of regeneration; all Christians hold this: far as they are parted on other topics, they cannot but hold the same fundamental truth, that all the power of having this new nature communicated to us is by the Holy Ghost. Some may hold the truth more intelligently and carefully as to form; but all necessarily own the Holy Ghost as that which convinces them of their evil and gives them this new life, which is of God.

But this is not the question discussed here. The Galatians had new life, but what was to be the power for

producing Christian holiness? They were bringing in the rule of the law as a means of holiness; and the apostle entirely puts this aside “Walk,” he says, “in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.” There we have the divine guard; nay, more than that, it is not merely admonition against this or that evil, but what will give us power for what is good. “Walk in the Spirit.” The Holy Ghost has been sent down to dwell in the believer. It is not the truth of our being builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit, as in Ephesians, where we have also the body of Christ brought out, the corporate relations of the children of God. The Epistle to the Galatians never gives us what is corporate, but always what is individual. And the walk being an individual thing, or what concerns each soul, if there were not another in the world, this is what you want. The word is, “Walk in the Spirit;” he does not say, Walk in the law. On the contrary, he had dealt sharply with the men who were so zealous for that rule. “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.” You want power against the lusts of the flesh: the Spirit is that power, and there is no other. “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, in order that ye may not do the things that ye would.” This, I believe, is what the Holy Ghost wrote and meant. What we have in our version is, as many of us have long known, positively wrong. I wish not to pass it over, nor to bring it in by an underhand way: but wherever there is anything plainly mischievous in this version, which is but a human one, it is a christian duty to call attention to it; and the more so, as I am always ready to maintain its general excellence and to defend the common Bible we have got against adversaries who would do it dishonour. But it is not a

friend’s part to justify a real mistake that may have slipped in through human infirmity, or worse.

Here, then, is one of the most serious mistakes, practically. When I insist upon this, it is not a matter that I admit to be open to a question, or that there should be any doubt about. No person acquainted at all intimately with the language in which the Holy Ghost wrote, could hesitate, save through the effect of strong prejudice. I would also observe, that the best men — the ablest scholars, who perhaps differ from my own views as to much I deem important — nay, persons who are dignitaries in the very church which had the principal hand in the production of this version, — admit candidly and with one consent, that the version I have just given is the true one. There is no doubt of it on the minds of persons of the most opposite ways of thinking on other matters, as to what is the true meaning of this verse. The Holy Ghost, then, says, “In order that ye may not do the things that ye would,” The very point of the verse is this. He was showing them why they were called upon to walk in the Spirit; and what was the true preservative against the lusts of the flesh. For the two are totally opposed: they are contrary to one another in every way. It is not said, You have got the law that you may not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; but, having a nature that will always be prone to do its own will, you have not merely the law to restrain it, but the Holy Ghost is given; not like the law, a thing outside one; but the Holy Ghost is an inward power, identifying Himself with the affections of the soul, and giving strength to desires after what is good, and against natural lusts, or any way in which the flesh may show itself.

He quite admits that there was the flesh — pride, vanity, everything that is evil, at work. But, as Christians, you have the Holy Ghost, and walking in the Spirit, “ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.” Though the lusts of the flesh are there, you have the Spirit, too, in order that you may not fulfil those lusts. If what we have in our version, “so that ye cannot do the things that ye would,” were correct, it would be like blowing hot in the one verse and cold in the other. He would be telling them in one verse that they must walk in the Spirit, and in the next that they cannot do it after all. Such a rendering carries its own refutation on its face. I press this the more strongly, because it is a practical point to christian people. On mere critical questions, I should never think of disturbing people’s minds. There is so much of the deepest moment for our souls with God every day, that the less we have to do with points of curious learning the better. But when it comes to be a matter of correcting what every christian scholar knows to be an error, it is evident that I should be guilty of keeping up a serious mistake if such a point as the present were slurred over.

One thing that has led, I apprehend, to the confusion on the subject, is that many have assumed the doctrine to be the same as in Romans 7. But in that chapter, after the first six verses, the Holy Ghost gives us the experience of a person troubled under law. Accordingly we have not there the Spirit of God introduced at all. This is a remarkable fact, which accounts for the difference between that scripture and what we have here. There, it is a renewed man — a soul really born of God, but one who, while he hates sin as no unconverted man does, loves righteousness because it is of God, has

a horror of evil; yet, spite of all, the evil that he would not he does; and the good he desires is never done. He has learnt the evil of sin, and sees the good of righteousness, but he is utterly powerless. What is the cause? The Holy Ghost shows the reason to be this — he has only the law before him. It is a man converted, but struggling under law; and the effect is that it entirely unnerves the man. So far from giving him courage, and drawing out what is in Christ, it is merely detecting him here and there, putting in a probe in one part and stabbing him in another so that he is bewildered to find in himself such an amount of evil as he never thought could be in the heart of a converted person. We all know something of this. We have not been long following Christ if we have not known some bitter struggles. The consequence is that all the poor soul is able to say is, “O wretched man that I am: who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” We might have thought that a Christian would have said, I have been delivered long ago. But observe this — he is not resting with his eye upon the Deliverer. He is converted, but he does not know liberty. He has faith in the Saviour, but he does not uncle. stand the application of His death and resurrection to his condition. He does not know that he is no longer viewed in the flesh, but in the Spirit — that he is entitled to have done with his old nature altogether, and to see himself in Christ before God The moment he comes to this discovery, that it is a mistake to apply the law to his soul, he gives thanks. Before this, he cries out in the intensity of his agony, “O wretched man that I am!” And yet, just then comes this new thought from God, “Who shall deliver me?” 1 have got it now; I see that it is not my own struggling with the law to overcome the evil; I see there is another, a Deliverer.

— Therefore he can turn with thankfulness to God the very next moment, and say, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” After this he is happy, perfectly happy, spite of the consciousness that there is the old nature still within him. What makes him happy? He sees that there are two distinct things — the old nature which, if it is allowed to work, always serves the law of sin, and the new nature, which always seeks the will of God, whatever it may be. Now, then, he is enabled to enter into the great truths of Romans 8: “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;” and intelligently, too, “for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” He does not leave it in the vague way, “made all free,” but it “hath made me free.” It is not a general creed, but the truth is applied in the most positive manner to the personal need of the once struggling soul. There is no longer any bondage, now that he sees Christ is risen. What is He risen for? As the head of a family, risen to give me a new name and standing altogether. He has gone down under the sea of my sins, and he is risen above them. What was of mine led Him below; and if He is risen above, it is to raise me with Him too. The resurrection of Christ was not to give Him a standing, but to give us, to give me, a standing. The death of Christ was for us, to put away our sin; the resurrection of Christ was to bring in a blessing that nothing can touch. The effect of the first coming of Christ is, that our souls enter into this; the effect of His second coming will be, that our bodies, free from every trace of sin, will enter into it perfectly, as our souls should now. If we rest upon Him, we ought not to have a single doubt. It is not at all a question whether I find any flesh in me; it would be rather a proof that I was not a Christian if I did not.

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” “If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” This is a darker case, because there is a plain, positive declaration of Scripture against it.

What marks a Christian is, then, not that he has not sin within, but that he has a new nature, which none has except he that believes in Jesus by the Holy Ghost. In virtue of Christ, God regards him as one who has entirely done with sin as a matter of divine judgment on us. God has quite closed with it thus; not as a dealing with us day by day. There is where confession of failure comes in; and thus, it is a good and right thing for a Christian to judge and confess his evil. A man’s being entirely forgiven all trespasses does not put aside the need and duty and privilege of confessing the truth about ourselves to God, day by day. It is a very blessed thing that we may do it with the confidence that God is interested in us — that God loves we should go to Him about all. We should have sufficient reliance on His own love, to bring out our every failure, and tell it out before Him.

The law said, Stand back. If even a poor brute touched the mountain, it was to be stoned or thrust through with a dart. What the law said to one, it said to all. It did not say, Any of you that are believers can come near. The law does not draw distinctions between believers and unbelievers. It does not make allowance for human infirmity. Are people sinners? If so, then they are cursed. There is the sentence of the law. It never made a man righteous, any more than a human law produces honesty. There never was a man made honest by an act of parliament since the world began What makes people

obey is Christ entirely above the law. The just dread of wrath may awaken, but it gives no power. So, in earthly things, there must be a principle above the fear of being sent to the house of correction. If it be only that dread which keeps a man from stealing, he is a rogue. So it is precisely with the believer. What makes a man a Christian, keeps him walking as a Christian. It is the power of the Spirit of God revealing Christ. Are you going back to the law to keep your soul in order?

It would have been much better that you had been filled with Christ, walking in the Spirit. For what does the Spirit do? He is glorifying Christ. This is always the true test. The power of a thing is not the test of it. If a man talked a great deal about the Spirit, and at the same time was serving sin, and not Christ, who could have confidence in the case? He might be self-deceived. A man may make the most exorbitant pretensions to have the power of the Holy Ghost acting in him or the body; but how am I to know that the claim is a real one? Let us look at the Epistles of John, who tells us to try the spirits. The great criterion is just this — the Holy Ghost invariably exalts Christ. The object is not to aggrandise the Church or a minister. All these things flow from man’s misuse of the things of God. I am not denying that the Church has a most important place; but it is as being the subject vessel of the Spirit of God — the scene where the Holy Ghost sets forth Christ. If human pretensions are allowed, or the world made much of, it is not the Church of God led of the Spirit. It may be man’s church, or the world-church, but it is not the Church of God. What characterizes the Church is the owned, recognized, carried-out truth of the Spirit’s presence.

There may be failure, as there is in an individual Christian man, who may show temper, pride, or vanity; still he will feel it, when he is brought to his senses, though the Lord may have to break a person's bones sometimes, like Job, to make him know what he is. The true action of the Holy Ghost, whether in the individual or in the body, is in the exaltation of Christ. And if you have the individual failing, or the Church, it will come to the same thing. God will never allow an assembly that He owns to go on in evil. He knows how to chastise a Christian assembly as well as a Christian man. He will deal with them if they are honest. We ought to be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication make our requests known unto God. We need not be restless and tried about this or that. We often fail in thinking what we may do in talking to people; whereas if we spoke a good deal more to God, and less to man, others would not be losers, and we should be gainers, and God would be far more glorified.

However that may be, what we find here is that the Spirit of truth is the power of holiness — that the Spirit of God it is which enables a Christian man to walk aright, not the law. That is the point he brings them to: and so he concludes the matter, "If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law." It is plain that if to be under the law were the means of Christian holiness, it would have been said, "If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are under the law," rather than, ye are not under the law."

But men are blinded. Though they constantly take up the commandments, repeat them and teach them, yet they say they are not under the law! How could persons be more under the law than when they adopt the language of the Ten Commandments, as the expression of their

own relationship before God? It is done as literally and definitely by Christian people, at the present-day, as it ever was even by the children of Israel themselves. For persons to say that while acting and speaking thus in their public worship, they are at the same time not under the law, is evidently to cheat their souls in a very fearful manner. What is meant by being under the law? That I acknowledge myself under that rule as what God has given me, the rule by which I have to live. If a person were to use the law for the purpose of convincing a poor, ungodly man of his sins, that is not to be under the law. But if I take up the ten words, and ask God to enable me to keep each, this is to confess myself under the law.

Then may I break the law? God forbid. Such an alternative could only emanate from one who understands little indeed of the grace of Christ. All admit that the law is good and righteous. The question is, whether the God that gave the law to Israel has given the same to Christians, as the rule by which they — we — are to live? I deny it. He gave it to Israel. What He has given to the Church is Christ. Christ is unfolded in the whole word of God; and what the Christian has to walk by, is the entire word of God; and so taught as to manifest Christ. If it is taken up in mere letter, what does the Scripture say? It kills; but the Spirit gives life. One may take up Exodus 20 and draw from part of that chapter a statement of the grace of God. When God gives the law, He tells them that He was the God that brought them out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage. One might show how we, too, are delivered out of our bondage. This is quite grace, as far as it goes. But the moment you put Christians under the

law as that which they have to walk by, like an Israelite of old, you are doing the very evil that the Epistle to the Galatians was intended to correct, and what the Holy Ghost says those led by the Spirit do not. “If ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” So men are doing at the present time — taking up the language of the commandments that were intended for Israel, and this not merely to convict of sin; but they undertake them as the directory of their own obedience to God every day. Yet they are obliged to explain away a great deal of the law; for instance, the sabbath-day. They keep, and very properly, the Lord’s-day; and I keep it too. But I deny it to be the sabbath-day, and maintain that the first day and the seventh day are not the same thing. Scripture always contrasts the first day with the seventh. The one is the first, the other is the last day of the week. The first day is a new thing, altogether apart from the law. People think that the keeping of a seventh day is the important thing. But this is not what God says, but the seventh day; and we are not at liberty to alter Scripture. This is not hearing the law, but destroying it. Who gave any man liberty to change the for a? specially as the change makes an all-important difference. Let us only beware of tradition and seek to understand the word of God.

The denial that the law is the Christian’s rule of walk is far from impairing holiness. The Holy Ghost brings in a deeper character of holiness than was even tasked in the Ten Commandments. When our Lord said, “Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees,” He did not mean righteousness imputed to us, but practically true. The Christian has a righteousness that is real. It is true that we become the

righteousness of God in Christ, but that this is the only righteousness of the believer, I dispute. The Holy Ghost produces a real work in his soul, founded upon the work of Christ — separation from the world, devotedness to God, obedience, and love; and all these things, not merely according to the Ten Commandments, but according to the will of God as it was fully displayed in Christ. If any man hold that because the Lord kept the law, He did nothing else, one pities him. The keeping of the law was a small part of His obedience; and we are called to be like Christ in His devotedness to God at all cost. A first principle of practical Christianity runs thus: “If when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.” This is a thing guise unknown to the legal system. In the Ten Commandments we find, if a man obeyed his parents, he should live long on the earth. That this is not the principle on which God now deals is most evident; for we have all known most obedient children taken away in early days. Am I denying that there is an important spiritual truth for me to gather from that very word? Quite the contrary. St. Paul himself refers to this promise, not at all, as it seems to me, as a motive why a christian child should obey its parents, but as the general indication of God’s mind. It was the first commandment with promise.

The spiritual instincts of Christians, let me add, are beyond their system; and although they are doctrinally under the law, they desire to walk in the Spirit. I have not a single unkind feeling against those who maintain that state of things. But the Spirit of God does speak of it as a very great error and peril. What we have to do, then, is to understand the mind of God, to give utterance to it and obey. “If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not

under the law." The Jews were. Whenever we see the people of God in Scripture under the law, it always means Israel. If a man now puts himself in a Jewish position, he takes upon himself that responsibility. In his faith he may be a Christian; but in outward forms and ordinances he is at least half a Jew,. We ought to seek that they may be Christians, and nothing else — to have done with that which covers and obscures the character of Christ, and for which they have to pay the sad penalty either of carelessness of life, or of having their hearts cast down and doubting, instead of enjoying the liberty with which Christ has made us free.

After this the apostle draws out the contrast of the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit.

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest" — there was no difficulty to discern them — "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." Thus you have human corruption and human violence. You have idolatry and witchcraft brought in, and on the other hand, seditions and heresies, which refer to the party-spirit that might be at work even under a christian profession. A child of God might slip into any of these evil things for a time; but there is a solemn sentence pronounced upon them — "Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." He warns them now, as he had while he was with them, "that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Whatever the difficulty may be, let us never doubt, but most firmly receive it as from God, that Christ is the power of God to every one

that believes. He is the power of God not merely to justification, but to salvation; and salvation, while it includes justification, goes far beyond it, because it takes in all the course of a christian man till he is actually in the resurrection state along with Christ. This is the meaning of the verse, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” — not your own forgiveness, but your own salvation. It is said to those who were already forgiven. Thus, salvation, in the sense spoken of there, implies the whole conflict with the power of evil we are passing through. We know that we have to do with the common enemy; but God is at work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. We know the deep concern and regard which God feels for us, as committed to this conflict. We are fighting under His orders — doing His will in that thing as well as in others. So far is God from leaving us in any way, that He assures our soul He is pledged to see us through to the end; but He will have a solemn sense of the war with Satan in which we are engaged.

Then we have, on the other side, “the fruit of the Spirit is love.” He begins with love — that which is of God, and flows directly from God, and which is the knowledge of God’s character more than any other thing. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.” Such are the first and weightiest effects produced by God’s love. Then he gets down to what would more particularly deal with one another: “meekness, temperance,” because these suppose the bridle put upon the evil nature — the self-control which the Holy Ghost works in the soul for the Lord’s sake, as evidently being set in this world to be an epistle of Christ, so that we should not give a false character to

Him whose name we bear. But all these are the fruits of the Spirit; and he adds, “against such there is no law.” When did law ever produce these? So the law will never condemn those who walk in these things; as he says to the Roman saints, Romans 13, speaking of governors and rulers, “Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; for he is the minister of God to thee for good.” So here, “against such there is no law.” If you are producing these fruits of the Spirit, there is no condemnation against them.

Is the old nature then forgotten? Or is the law needed. for disciplining it? The belief so thinks; but the word says, on the contrary, “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” He shows that all that are Christ’s have gone through the great question of what was not His: they have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. They have submitted, by faith, to the sentence of death on all their nature — they have “crucified the flesh.” We know, of course, that it is only really and fully done in Christ — that it is in the cross of Christ that the crucifixion of the flesh, with all its lusts, has taken place. Hence, too, it is true of every believer. The flesh, with the affections and lusts, is a thing already done with in God’s sight. If we are Christians at all, we have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts If it were only a person just born of God, he might say he has “crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts.”

But it may be asked, Have not I the flesh to crucify? I answer, it is done already: you have to believe it, and to walk in the strength that faith gives you. What a comfort to know that the flesh is a judged thing — that sentence of death has been executed on it! What will strengthen

more than, that you are not alive in the flesh now, but living in the Spirit? And “if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” Let this be the standard by which you desire to be directed — that you have the Holy Ghost dwelling in you, and willing to strengthen you in Christ. Let your aim be to walk in that fire of things.

The Lord grant us to have wisdom from above, to know what we are, and what we are not: that we may believe, whatever be the evil, whatever its strength or tendencies, there is the power of the Holy Ghost to strengthen us against and above every evil thing. But the Holy Ghost will not put forth His power, except as Christ is before us. If we seek to please self in anything, we shall only find that God will turn the self-pleasing we choose to our chastening. And therefore what a happy privilege that, in submission to God, we may, as we should, give ourselves to the glory of Christ in everything.

Galatians 6

The close of the last chapter had shown us the works of the flesh on the one hand, and the fruits of the Spirit on the other, with the very solemn injunction to the children of God that if they lived in the Spirit, (which they necessarily did, if they were children of God,) they were also to walk in the Spirit. It was in vain to speak about privilege, if there was indifference to practical ways. We cannot have life in the Holy Ghost, without also being bound by the most solemn sanctions that the Holy Ghost should also be the grand directing force of the walk. The act is but the outward expression of the inner principle. The life can only be absolutely known to

God: the walk is that which is manifested before men. But now, besides exhorting them to beware of vain-glory, whatever form it might take, whether of provoking, or of envying one another, (Gal. 5:26), we have fresh ground taken at the beginning of chapter 6.

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” Supposing a person goes altogether wrong, and is positively surprised into what is plainly evil, what then? Still the Holy Ghost presses that the spiritual should “restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.” A very weighty word indeed. For, first, in case of a fall, through want of watchfulness and dependence upon God, we learn who are most adapted to meet the need. It is the obligation of all in a general way; but who are those that the Holy Ghost urges to deal well with such a case? “Ye which are spiritual.” Now it does not follow that he who is born of God is spiritual. To “live in the Spirit” is a very different thing from being “spiritual.” A spiritual person not only lives, but walks in the Spirit. Of course, he has the infirmities of other men, and may at times show nature; but in an obvious way, taken as a whole, through the grace of God, he has learnt to judge, not to spare self, to detect, especially in himself, departure from the Lord, and to own it frankly and humbly before God. In consequence of this habitual self-judgment, there will be far greater tenderness in dealing with sin in others. They may have a keen discernment; but where it comes to that which is real and most serious — which perhaps many would give up as making the case hopeless, and think that the person could not be a Christian at all — they, knowing more of the subtlety of the flesh as well as

of the grace of God, are able to count upon His goodness, and are the very persons to deal with the evil and to restore that soul. So that you will always find in cases that call for gracious handling, it is for the spiritual, not those that are the most used themselves to trip, not those that are apt to indulge the flesh and depart from the Lord. These men some might think the most like]y to deal pitifully with such as stumble; but on the contrary, those are called for who walk circumspectly and in self-judgment, as a general rule, and who are thus kept from slipping, through habitual leaning on a faithful Lord; because the very power that preserves them from going astray is what gives them to understand the grace of God and to use that grace for others. Accordingly these are told to “restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.”

He adds further, “Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” This would justly be before the mind’s eye of a spiritual man. He has the deepest sense of his own weakness; and hence would he most readily esteem others better than himself. How is that? Not of course that he who has made progress in the ways of God is to count a babe’s knowledge greater than his own. Not that there are not, on the one hand, in the Church, those who are least esteemed, and on the other, men of tried and spiritual judgment. Not that we are to suppose all alike wise, strong, and honourable. This would be not faith, but fanaticism, and contrary to every right thought. In what sense then are we to esteem “others better than ourselves?” When a soul that is in any measure spiritual, thinks of himself, what he feels is his immense falling short of Christ. He has habitually before him how greatly he fails, even of that which he desires in his

ways before God. But when he looks at his brother-christian, let him be the feeblest possible, and sees him as a beloved one of Christ, in full acceptance in, and the object of, the Father's tender affections, this draws out both love and self-loathing! Thus, if grace be at work, what is Christ-like in another saint rises at once before the heart, and what is unlike Christ in himself. So that it is not a question of striving to cultivate high feelings about one's neighbours, and to think them what they are not, but really believing what is true about them, and feeling rightly about ourselves too. If one thinks of what a saint is in Christ and to Christ, and what he will be through Christ, then one's heart takes in the wonder of His love, and how much the Lord makes of him: but when the eye is turned to oneself, all the unworthy ways and feelings and shortcomings come up in humiliating remembrance. So, in considering "thyself, lest thou also be tempted," with this difference, that it is not so much looking at what we have been, as at what we have to fear and watch against.

But, further, in the next verse he presses upon them the bearing of one another's burdens. There are difficulties, trials, sorrows; there are things in the shape of infirmity; there are circumstances of the most variedly painful nature that press upon the children of God. Now, if we wish to show our value for the saints, opportunity need not be lacking. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Stoop down, and take up that which your brother groans under. The Ten Commandments may not demand it; but so you will fulfil the law of Christ. This is the law for us Christians. It is not a question of the law of Moses; because although that was the law of God, and always must be the

measure with which God deals with the natural man, He is dealing here with those who were living in the Spirit; and the law at Sinai was never given to the spiritual man, but to a fleshly people, even to Israel. The law deals with the natural man, and therefore with what is evil in him. Who can tell the new man, “Thou shalt not kill;” “thou shalt not steal?” Does the new man ever lust, or commit adultery? The very notion carries upon its face the evidence that the whole theory is false. The law of the Ten Commandments never was addressed to the new man at all. The new man can make use of it; but this is a very different thing from taking it up as the language of its own responsibility before God. If we are saints, we are not doing to live, but living to do our Lord’s will without such a thought as death or the curse.

You who contend for a legal rule, what, I ask, is this “law of Christ?” Christ was always occupied about others. He never did, in one act of His life, His own will. This is precisely to be holy in love, which Christ was: obedient and truthful in love was what characterized all His existence here below. Supposing we were to do any and every duty merely because we thought it right, it would be always wrong. As a Christian, I should have failed in what is nearest to God, and for this simple reason — that merely doing duty because it is duty, does not put the soul in the attitude of obedience, but may be only proud self-pleasing, and homage to the innermost idol of the heart. To do what I judge right may therefore be no better than a subtle rebellion against God. I have no right to choose my own path. I am under obedience, if I tale the place of being His creature; and still more, if I am and own myself His child. The question, then, is, What is my Father’s will? How beautifully our Lord

showed this, even before He entered upon the public part of His ministry! He had always, and in the highest sense, the consciousness of His own relationship. “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?’ And so it was in every case. Take Him afterwards in His ministry. Even in a matter that had so strong an appeal to His affections as a man, when Lazarus was a-dying, why does He stay in that place two days after hearing that he was sick? He acts not only not on the ground of mere right, but not on the ground of mere love to the person He loved; He must have the Father’s command before He goes.

This is what we need to bear in mind. If you take the law given at Sinai, you have God requiring that which condemns a sinner. God was not manifesting Himself there as Father. Take, again, the sovereign of this country: she sends out her army to attack some foreign enemy, or a word of authority to deal with some rebellious province. Who would argue that she was acting as a mother in these cases? Who would conclude that thus we view her in relation to her children? It is as a sovereign, and with rebellious subjects, that she so acts. At Sinai there was a nation, God’s rebellious subjects; and He was laying down in thunder and lightning, and with a voice more terrible than either, what He could not but require from guilty Israel. But when God, who spoke thus terribly, speaks now, how is it? By His Son. It is the same God, but His voice how different! God always maintains His right and title, not only to make good that which He uttered in connection with Israel of old, but to bring in that which is new. What means a new covenant, if it does not antiquate that which went before?

So here, we have the law of Christ, in pointed contrast with the law of Moses, which dealt with rebellious flesh. The law of Christ directs those who live in the Spirit, and ought to be walking in the Spirit, but who have got, nevertheless, an evil nature still. And how are they to be strengthened in the new nature, and to overcome the old? He points them at once to Christ, and says, “Bear ye,” etc. Such is the loving, unselfish way to fulfil the law of Christ. Interest your soul about saints in need and distress; and even if there is that which is positively evil, it will cast you upon God to bring out something from Christ suited to lift up the soul that has slipped into the mire. He first introduces the flagrant case of a person falling into sin, and then he enlarges it. If you want to know what is the path of Christ now, and the will of God, this was what Christ was doing. He came into a world full of evil and opposition to God — full of pride and vanity, and what was He doing? “He went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil,” etc. Though we may not be able to work miracles, yet in all that is in spirit like Christ, the moral principle of the life of Christ here below is precisely that which every believer has. If you have Christ at all, you have Christ not only for atonement, but as your life. He that believeth on the Son has everlasting life; and the everlasting life is Christ, just as truly as by being born into the world from Adam I have got an old natural life that loves evil, and which, as it grows in strength, grows in capacity for self-will. Even so, if I believe in Christ, there is this new life produced, which is developed in proportion as Christ is fed upon and looked to, and as Christ’s words and ways are pondered over by the soul.

There is an assimilating power communicated thus to the believer by the Holy Ghost. The words of our Lord are spirit and life. It is not only that they produce life in the first instance, but they sustain the life, and are the means of its vigour. And this is what the Apostle Peter shows us. (1 Peter 1) He speaks of the incorruptible seed, the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever. But then he shows that the same word of God which is the means of first imparting the life through the revelation of Christ, is also the provision for strengthening and refreshing it. Therefore he exhorts them that, as new-born babes, they should desire the sincere milk of the word. The word of God which is first used to introduce the life into the soul, through the making known of Christ, is that which now keeps up the life, draws it out, brings it into healthful exercise. And here is one way — “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” This is what Christ was doing when He was here below. He did not please Himself. He never chose the path of ease; but, on the contrary, every case of wretchedness and sin and sorrow was what occupied the Lord Jesus, provided it were the will of God. When He took His place as man on earth, there was the continual exercise of communion between the Lord Jesus and His Father, the spirit of dependence upon the living God that never acted without His Father’s direction. And so it should be with our souls. If we are thus laying ourselves out to bear one another’s burdens, we need to wait upon God about it to know what the will of the Lord is. It is not the law nor ordinances, but “bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

“For if a man think himself to be something,” etc. This is the invariable effect of law acting upon the spirit. It supposes a man to have power — at any rate, to be still alive as a man in the world. But this is the very thing which, even in our baptism, we declare is no longer our confession. For what does the baptism of a Christian man set forth? It is the acknowledgment of the Christ who is dead and risen, and that, in Christ’s death, I am dead to sin and the world, and God’s judgment too. I have passed out of the scene of living men upon the earth, and am introduced into a new condition before God; I have entered upon a new life; I am dead to what I formerly lived to, and alive to that which I was formerly dead to. Into all this Christ brings him that believes.

Manifestly, then, “If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.” The law never crushes the pride of man; and man will bear with anything that supposes he can do something. The law works upon the mere nature of man, and puffs him up, unless it be used of the Holy Ghost to slay him in his conscience. Nature perverts it to the notion that it can do something; and people love this, and are the more pleased with themselves. This is what the gospel destroys by the very roots. And hence persons who are uncommonly self-satisfied when put upon the ground of doing great things for God, would be deeply mortified and offended if told plainly that they are not capable of serving Him. How few would bear to hear that they had never worshipped God all their life, and cannot till born of God! They are offended at such a doctrine as this, because it males self nothing and God everything; it brings before them what an awful peril they are exposed to — lost indeed. If they believed it, they would cry out

to God about it, and look to God to give them new life. But as long as men are dealt with on legal principles, the distinction between what is of the first man and the Second is, more or less, merged. Man is addressed as such, and not thoroughly as a sinner, or as a saint; but the two things are confused together: so that souls do not know clearly whether they are saved or lost, whether they have passed from death unto life, or are still under the wrath of God. This is the reason why we find so many, even some who are true believers, frequently suffering from clouds and eclipses. The root of the matter is the abuse of the law. It was what worked among the Galatians; and what has tied and bound with the chain of their sins so many thousands of God's children ever since. Thus it was acting upon their flesh and it made them think themselves to be something, when in truth they were nothing; and if a man does, evidently, as the apostle adds, "he deceiveth himself." Nothing can be more cutting than the words here.

But if they bowed to the word and were willing to be nothing, but that God should work, he adds, "let every man prove his own work." God begins upon the ground that we are nothing; that the wise man must become a fool, in order that he may learn to be wise. Man does not like it, and kicks against it; and the consequence is, that he always remains in his own imbecility. Whereas you will never get a man in the truth of his own ruin without finding God there in the truth of His love, giving him eternal life in His Son. And what then? Let him "prove his own work; and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." Supposing one really to examine everything, thus thoroughly to prove his work, then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in

another. There the apostle is giving a home-thrust: let him put it to the proof. No doubt the Lord will own true service; but wherever a man honestly examines and proves his work, it is never a subject of self-gratulation, but most humiliating in every possible way. But, at least, when the true time comes, there will be the reaping, if we faint not.

The apostle winds up this part of his subject by another word, and one that might appear to be paradoxical, if compared with the second verse. “For every man shall bear his own burden.” In fact, we have here the two great practical principles of Christianity: the one is active energetic love, which bears the burdens of others; and the other is personal responsibility. “Every man shall bear his own burden.” Observe, this is not speaking about salvation. If a man had to bear his own burden in the matter of justification before God, it would be to destroy every hope. “Enter not,” says the Psalmist, “into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” If in this question God enters into judgment with me, I am lost. He says, “Enter not into judgment” (not with a sinful man, but) “with thy servant.” It is a converted or regenerate man. Therefore it is that our Lord brings out, in the question whether a man shall not be left to perish in his own death, or be delivered by the power of the life of Christ, a totally different principle. He says, “Verily I say unto you, He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life.” You will observe that in this passage I have altered the word “condemnation” to judgment;” I have done it advisedly, because it is the only true meaning of the word.

“Condemnation” is a positive mistake. That which is rightly translated “condemnation” elsewhere, is totally different from this. Thus, “there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” is not the same word at all. But sometimes where our Lord and the Holy Spirit say “judgment,” the translators have ventured to depart from the word of God, and have introduced “condemnation.”

Nor is this confined to one passage only. In the remarkable revelation about the Lord’s Supper in 1 Corinthians 11, a very similar mistake occurs. The translators have introduced a word and idea of their own, unequivocally erroneous: and have ventured to say, that “he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.” It is not true. God says, “he eateth and drinketh judgment to himself.” There is no competent judge, no christian man acquainted with the language of the Holy Ghost, that could deny it, if he fairly examined the evidence. Human tradition accounts for the proneness of persons to put aside plain principles of the truth. For it is not so much a question to be decided on critical grounds; but such an alteration contradicts the whole object of the Holy Ghost in the passage. What is the apostle telling these Corinthians? You have been treating the supper of the Lord unworthily, by making it a common thing. Some of you have gone so far as to forget yourselves in open, gross sin. There is a peculiar solemnity about the Lord’s supper as about the Lord’s day. He who pretends that the Lord’s day is the Sabbath, and that the Lord’s supper resembles a Jewish ordinance, does not know what the two most characteristic christian institutions mean. The Lord’s day differs from every other day, the

day of grace and resurrection (the Sabbath being the token of creation and law). So with the Lord's supper: in it the Lord sets before the believer his perfect deliverance, the blood and the broken body of Christ, and gives the witness to his soul that he is free from all condemnation. Now, says the apostle, you who have eaten and drank as at a common meal, you have been participating unworthily. For a converted person might eat and drink unworthily. These Corinthian saints took it lightly, and the devil got advantage over them, and some had even become drunken. This, says the apostle, was to eat and drink judgment to themselves, not the Lord's supper. The consequence was that some of them were sick, and others were dying. He lets them know that the Lord was judging them, and laying His hand upon them. But this most unquestionably was judgment, not "damnation." And what was the end of the Lord in all this? "That we should not be condemned with the world." "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 that we should not have damnation; whereas the common version makes it out that they were exposed to this very doom. Read the word as "judgment," and you will find that an entirely new light is thrown on the passage. Introduce the wrong word, and you disturb the balance, beyond all recovery; but the moment you return to the true sense, suggested in the margin, all is made plain. What before was dark, and troubled your soul, now you see to be simple, and solemn, holy, and withal comforting. If you have been treating the memento of the Lord's sufferings lightly, you are in danger of thus coming under His hand. Some had even been taken away; but it is, "that we should not

be condemned with the world." The intimation is, that they were such naughty children that they could not be left in this world any longer. Therefore He put sickness upon them, and took them away by death.

The meaning of the word (

κριμα) in 1 Corinthians 11 is closely akin to that in John 5 (κρισις). What our Lord is teaching in the gospel is that men must have one or the other thing from Christ — either life or judgment. The main difference is, that in John 5 the judgment is the final and eternal act of judging; whereas 1 Corinthians 11 speaks of a disciplinary process in this world. But the right word is "judgment," not "condemnation." Our Lord shows Himself to be the giver of life in communion with the Father, and the exclusive executor of judgment. He is giving life now: whoever believes in Him, has life; whoever refuses Him must come into judgment. For no person can be the object of both life and judgment. The reason why people shall come into judgment, is because they reject the Son of God and eternal life in Him. "He that hath the Son hath life." This is the point of our Lord's words. They might ask, How is this life everlasting to be had I Is it by obedience? or by an ordinance?

Neither the one nor the other. "Verily I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life." He that so hears and believes, knows that God is interested about souls — that He wishes to have them happy and without sin through the Lord Jesus Christ. But further, "he shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life." It is the very same thing in Heb. 9:27. "As it is appointed unto

men once to die, but after this the judgment." It is the same word. This is man's portion, from which he cannot escape. Man as such must die, and must be judged. But mark, it is he who lives and dies as a mere natural man. It is not said that it is so appointed for the Christian. On the contrary, there are many Christians that will never die; and no saint will ever be judged eternally.

I must prove what I am saying by other passages. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." That is, the living saints are caught up with the dead that are risen already. But take another scripture. "We shall not all sleep." Men must all die; but "we shall not all sleep." We shall not all necessarily die; but we shall all be changed. Whether they be dead Christians, or living ones, all must be changed, conformed to the image of the Firstborn, glorified in their bodies. But all saints will not have departed this life, nor need resurrection; for those Christians who will be found alive when Christ comes, will be taken up to be with Christ, and changed into His glorious image, without passing through death at all, like so many Enochs, at once transformed into the likeness of Christ's glory. This is what all of us as Christians ought to be waiting for, without knowing when it may be. Therefore it is said, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."

But what will become of those who have refused Christ? They must all be judged. "It is appointed unto men once to die; but after this the judgment." But more than this — "as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this

the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." There you have the two portions: — man's, death and judgment; the Christian's, Christ, the one offering for sins, and about to return in glory for their full salvation, not judgment. The question of sin had been so completely settled at the first coming of Christ, that not a single question will ever be raised about it. When He comes again, "He will appear the second time without sin [i.e., apart from sin, having nothing to do with it] unto salvation." He had suffered for sin Himself — put it away Himself; and the consequence is, every believer, no matter where he is, no matter what his ignorance may be, is entitled to wait for the Lord, who will come for him, and come for all that have slept in Christ before him; he is entitled to know that Christ will never call him into judgment, because, having been judged for him, and having for ever put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, He shall appear to such the second time without sin unto salvation. But those who refuse Christ, so far from not coming into judgment, will be raised expressly for it from the dead afterwards. This is the "resurrection of judgment." Its effect, doubtless, will be damnation, but its scriptural designation is "judgment." It is the same word as before. The object of raising the evil will be for judgment. And what is the character of the believer's resurrection? Life — that the same life which is now given to our souls should have its full course and display over our bodies — that we should be perfectly filled with the life of Christ, body and soul.

Such is the Christian's expectation. Hence, in this fifth verse, ("Every man shall bear his own burden,") it is not

the least a question of bearing each our burden in judgment. If this were so, not a soul could be — not one deserves to be — saved. For who has not been guilty of sins, dark and deadly sins? — sins that God could not possibly forgive, unless He had a perfect way of His own, and He has. But that way cost Him His Son, and the cross of His Son; and the cross is the triumph of God. In it Christ has put away sin for ever for every soul that believes in Him. Therefore when He says, “Every man shall bear his own burden,” it is simply in view of the difficulties and trials in practical life. Mind, he says, that you bear one another’s burdens; — but, after all, every man must bear his own burden. Every one of us must have to do with God for himself. We cannot get any one else to answer for us. Some make Hebrews 13:17 (“ they watch for your souls as they that must give account”) to teach that ministers answer for the souls of others; but this is nonsense, or worse. The principle is false. There is no such thing as a person giving an account of another’s soul. Each must give an account of himself to God. The sinner must be judged; but every saint, as well as sinner, must give account of everything unto God. The believer, says our Lord, shall not come into judgment; which means that a man is put upon his trial to see whether he shall be saved or not. This can never be the case with a Christian man. Everything will be opened out before the Lord — not only the sins we may have done since we were believers, but what we committed when we were unconverted. We might suppose this would be inexpressibly terrible. But let us remember that the condition in which the believer will give account of himself to God, is when he will be like Christ — when he has not one feeling which is not of Christ — no desire but what will be for the glory of

Christ; all sense of shame will be gone, and only that will abide which is according to Christ. The thought that Christ will set us all perfectly, like Himself, in glory, is at once an answer to every anxiety of the soul. But while this is true, it is important to bear in mind that now there is a very active judgment going on. The Father is watching our ways and dealing with us; and we ought to be examining our ways day by day. Every one, saint or sinner, must render to God an account of himself: His power will accomplish it in both; in the one, to his utter condemnation — in the other, that he may learn how absolutely he is indebted to the grace of God. But this is a different thing from judgment. We cannot too strongly press, that to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ is not necessarily judgment. No word of Scripture can ever set aside the truth that "he that believeth..... shall not come into judgment." God never contradicts Himself. Every man bearing his own burden has to do with our responsibility. What a wonderful thing is this! — that we have done with our responsibility as men; and having got Christ, a new responsibility is begun for us. We have now to behave ourselves as those, who have eternal life, who belong not to ourselves, but to Him who died for us and rose again. Now commences our responsibility to live to Christ — to devote to Him the new life that God has given us, conscious that along with this the Lord sifts day by day our ways.

Then comes another thing, and it would appear that these saints had forgotten it: "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things." I think there is a little danger of ourselves forgetting this kind of relationship to all those whom the Lord has raised up for the good of the Church. There are

certain landmarks never to be obliterated. One is this very thing — the privilege and obligation of the taught to remember Christian teachers in love. It is not said, To him that teacheth them; but, “To him that teacheth.” What blessed largeness of feeling this! Supposing you are free from such a need in the particular place where you live, are you to be so shortsighted as to overlook the claims of the Lord elsewhere? This would be selfish indeed. Nothing could be more degrading for Christians than, when they have abandoned evils here or there, and do no longer what was almost compulsory, that they should take advantage of the name of the Lord to have what one might call a cheap Church; forgetting that they belong to the Church of God as a whole. “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.” Let none suppose that this was given only for early days; or that any circumstances can alter the responsibility of the saints in this respect. It is well for us to remind one another of it, that we are members of the body of Christ. Take the case of persons labouring abroad: has not that a voice for us? What a claim upon our love and sympathy! The Lord looks for far greater self-denial and service of love now than when it was a question of law. Let us not content ourselves with ceasing to do evil; but also learn to do good.

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption.” Evidently there it is a question of self-indulgence in one way or another. If there is a heart for the Lord, a way will soon be found wherein to serve Him fully; but that way often demands much self-denial. No circumstances set this aside. “God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man

soweth, that shall he also reap; for he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." This is very strong, yet most true. A person might say to me, I understood you to teach, that those that believe had life everlasting already; but here it is said, He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. Both statements are of the utmost value; but the point of view is totally different. If God is exhorting His people to a holy walk, He shows that life everlasting is the crown of that walk, and the end of it. Whatever may be the salvation that grace brings in, it never sets aside the value of holy devotedness to God. And, therefore, those who have true faith, manifest also real holiness; and only those. The two things coalesce. The believer in Christ receives everlasting life. What is the consequence? He sows to the Spirit, and reaps life everlasting. The life everlasting here is evidently what we are to have in glory. The everlasting life spoken of by John is what the saint possesses on earth. Both are tree. In glory he will find everlasting life without alloy. I receive it now as a believer from Christ, and I find it in heaven, pursuing the path of the holy will of God. The life-resurrection of believers consists of those who have done good here below. "Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." There is often a great danger of relaxing in the course. A man starts well and graciously; but after awhile he finds that he has been taken advantage of by so many people, that he becomes reserved and suspicions. This is to be weary in well-doing, or its effect. He is determined to be duped no more. The truth is, there is a great deal of flesh in that kind of talk and feeling. Where souls are occupied with the grace of God, they are not so easily

worn out. Because another has been selfish, is that a reason why a saint should become selfish too? The becoming state for a Christian is to have an open, generous heart, and to be active in looking out for suitable ways of doing good. The Lord does not say, Give what they ask; but the principle remains true, that the Christian is to keep the blessed vantage ground of being the giver. If I am on the standing of law, I shall merely be a bargainer; but if on the ground of grace and faith in Christ, I shall have the more blessed place; and it is more blessed to give than to receive. This reaping, plainly, is in glory. We are not to expect it here. We may meet with that which is sweet and grateful, but we are not to be surprised if we do not, and if there is much from men that is painful. Let us remember, it is to the Lord we are lending. Is there anything disappointing there? He that looks to the Lord is never disappointed. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men." This is the business of the Christian — doing good, and "especially unto them who are of the household of faith." There is a special connection with saints; but we are not to stop there. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, specially unto them who are of the household of faith."

It is important to bear in mind, in reading every part of the word of God, that there is nothing brought in without the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost. There is one particular passage in 1 Corinthians 7, where the apostle asserts expressly, that it was not the I,ord, but himself, who gives a certain judgment about the natural relations of believers. But even the apostle did not write thus without the Holy Ghost. He was inspired to say it was not the Lord, but himself. Hence there is not the

slightest contrariety, even in so exceptional a manner of speaking. Again, take the Book of Job, where you have Satan speaking, as well as elsewhere. But then, while no intelligent person would assert that what Satan said was inspired, yet the writer of the book was inspired to give it to us perfectly; the writer was thoroughly led of God to present just so much of what those concerned said, good or evil, man, Satan, or the Lord Himself, as would accomplish the divine object in that writing. Thus there is no exception whatever in the Bible to the grand truth that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God." This is not a mere deduction of man, but the positive doctrine of God Himself. Everything coming under the designation of "Scripture" (πᾶσα γραφή) is inspired of God. Such is the express statement of the Apostle Paul in his last epistle, (2 Tim.,) not limiting it, I apprehend, to what was already extant, but leaving room also for what was to be written; such as the Apocalypse. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," etc. Whether what had been given, or the little that remained in order to close the canon of the Bible, all was equally from God; not all is equally lofty in its character, not all taking the form of doctrine, not even all revelation — for revelation and inspiration are two different things. In giving the account of our Lord's life, the writers occasionally, of course, reported what they themselves saw and heard. It was inspired, but a revelation is that which man never knew. When the Apostle Paul says, It is by the word of the Lord I declare unto you, that the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, that is not merely an inspired portion, but a revelation. So, of course, all prophecy is necessarily a revelation; and it was only in case of a positive revelation that there was any licence to hinder a person who might be speaking; no matter how important

what he was communicating, if something was revealed to another who was sitting by, he was entitled to stop the speaker. This is necessarily, it seems to me, at an end now. Revelation being complete, any attempt to act upon it would be not only irregular and indecent, but a virtual pretension to a new revelation, which is positively false, and a dishonour to the old. When there was still a part of the mind of God yet to be imparted, God maintained the sovereign right of His Spirit to introduce a revelation. But when all the mind of God was thoroughly revealed in His word, such a line of conduct would naturally terminate. Accordingly, although a person might have what was most truly from God, it would be his duty to wait till the due time came; flesh, Satan, might hinder, but God is above all difficulties. I make these general remarks in reference to the verse which is about to come before us.

It might seem somewhat surprising in an epistle so full of statements of doctrine, and appeals to the conscience and heart. In the midst of all this, the apostle says, “Ye see how large a letter I have written to you with my own hand. Or if you take the phrase, as it may very well be taken, “Ye see with what large letters,” etc., it is still more striking. Writing was somewhat unusual, even for the Apostle Paul. To write an important document was not common, save through a secretary; it was a trade or occupation to itself. Therefore it was the habit of those occupied actively and arduously otherwise, to employ some one to write for them. In this instance! however, the apostle wrote himself, and, from not being used to writing, he drew attention to the large characters in the epistle. It was comparatively a short letter, but it was all written by him; and, from not being used to write his

own compositions, the letters seem to have been in this large handwriting, executed probably with considerable difficulty to himself. For we must remember that there was a great difference in the facility afforded for writing then, and at the present time. But there was something connected with the manner and bearing of the whole epistle in this simple fact. It is not a mere isolated circumstance, but the apostle lays stress on it, because of the state and dangers of the Galatians whom he was addressing. The Holy Ghost led him out in the strongest and most ardent desire for their deliverance. He therefore put aside any thought of employing a medium between them and himself; no matter what the difficulty, he will write to them himself. On other occasions, he might employ Tertius; but the case in hand was so urgent, the question at stake so all-engrossing and momentous, that every other task must give way. It was an hour so full of grave peril, that he tales no account of time, trouble, or anything else. It was a testimony of his intense interest in these Galatian saints, and so much the more striking, because of the marled absence of his customary greetings of personal, brotherly kindness. There we have a beautiful confirmation of the remarkable way in which the Holy Ghost mentions facts that bear the impress of God’s own mind, His care and love for His people, His deep concern in them. The apostle himself draws attention to the circumstances of this epistle. He had written by others, and to others, far more freely; for, as I said before, there is not a single salutation in the epistle. Not that he was straitened in desire before God; but he could not let out his Christian affections toward them. There was that in their conduct which, though it might be mingled with good, was so disastrous and contrary to Christ’s glory, that he stood

in doubt about them; he hoped about them, and that was all. He had confidence in the Lord touching them; but if he looked at themselves — at what they were doing and saying — he could have none.

The two facts, then — the absence of personal salutation, and his writing the letter himself — both bear a remarkable testimony to the manner of God's love working through man's heart. All the mere interchange of the fraternal amenities is at an end. People would have said, How unkind of Paul! But brotherly kindness is not love, though people often confound them. Had the apostle, as things were, sent friendly messages to one or another, it would have been merely human, and not of God. He could do that in writing to the Romans, and even to the Corinthians, but not to the Galatians. What an idea this gives of their state! And yet there were to be greater abominations than these: things incomparably worse must creep in, but these were reserved for John. And though of all others, he was (may I say it?) the conspicuous champion of love, yet so far was John from direct personal references in his first epistle, that it is not addressed to an assembly at all, but introduced without heading in the most general form; and therefore it is commonly called a catholic or general epistle. It was perhaps so written that it might be pre-eminently a sort of circular letter to the whole Church. I gather from this, that where there is that which torches the work of Christ, as in Galatians, or the person of Christ, as in St. John, all personal considerations must give way. As the Lord, in His final mission to Israel, (the Seventy, Luke 10) forbade the disciples to salute any man by the way, so here the Spirit carries out something analogous, because Christ's glory was at stake, and the

foundation of all blessing was menaced. Another thing to be observed is, that the children of God generally do not understand how the mingling of the law with Christ lies at the root of a thousand difficulties. It is a rare thing now to find a Christian who is not in principle where the Galatians were. In the present state of Christendom, we have been all trained to it from our' childhood. We shall not see it only in particular spots, here and there; but in one form or another it is the universally prevalent, the settled, chronic, fatal complaint in Christendom, insinuating itself into men's thoughts and ways, and everything.

Having so spoken, with that remarkable abruptness which marks his character — for we must all have noticed the exceeding rapidity of transition from one subject to another which so frequently characterizes the writings of the apostle — he turns to the subject that agitated his spirit, and sums up in these last verses both the danger and the blessing. "As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ." He does not mind what people may say. They might call it imputing motives, but no matter. It is in vain to deny that legalism fraternizes with the world, and loves its own ease, loves present reward, boast as it may of piety; it is, after all, only a desire to make a fair show in the flesh. This is very important; because, I ask, What is it now that men look for, and that men would be gratified with? If you had all the world attending churches and chapels — persons walking soberly and in a decent, orderly way otherwise — what universal rejoicing over the improved state and prospects of Christendom! And what would all this be in

the sight of God; I have not the slightest hesitation in saying, that, if there were no more, it would only be “a fair show in the flesh.” What we, as Christians, are entitled to look for, and what we ought never to be satisfied without is, that souls pass from death unto life” — that souls should be delivered from the power of Satan and be translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. Until they have passed the boundary, from the regions of men into the presence of God, what has been done that could be a positive ground of Christian joy and thankfulness? It is not a question now merely of society or the world. We know that the world is under condemnation, that ever since the cross of Christ, judgment has been impending, as decidedly as after a criminal has been tried and found guilty; as ha is waiting in his condemned cell for the sentence to be executed — such is man’s condition. Do Christians realize it? Most imperfectly. If they did, could they be upon common ground with the world? Could a person go into the convict’s cell and talk to him as if nothing were the matter? We must think such a speaker destitute of all right feeling. So it is in a far more awful way than the execution of a single criminal. We know well that in the day which is coming, there will be no escape then nor for eternity. “As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank. they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot: they did eat, they drank, they bought they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot wells out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.” God

looks that all His children should bear their testimony in the world that they know from Himself that all hangs on the uncertainty of a thread; that judgment is suspended over it; that Christ is ready to judge the quick and the dead. He awaits the will of His Father. All simply turns upon that. But we are told and know that He is coming, and coming shortly; and we wait for this. Yet in the midst of this scene of a condemned world, with the Lord coming to execute judgment upon it, there is such a thing as a number of souls who have passed through the faith of Christ into life everlasting, and who know it — at least who ought to know it. They belong to Him who is going to judge, not to the scene that is going to be judged.

What is the effect of all this? They have in spirit abandoned the circumstances in which men are striving to keep up a vain show; they have repented towards God; they have bowed down to the Saviour, the Lord Jesus, and have found eternal life and peace in Him. All is settled between their souls and God. With Christ the light, the truth, the life, the fair show has vanished. And while this great transaction is going on, a large part of the world seek to be as religions as they can; i.e., to reconcile religion with the world. And as the effect of this strategy of the enemy, and of their own unwatchfulness, very many of God’s children descend to it, because great names are there, appearances are there, and even the word of God may be quoted to show that it is right to walk there. This is commonly done by taking what God says to Israel, who were God’s people after the flesh, governed by the law, and applying it to those who are God’s people now, called to walk under grace and Christ alone, who have the Holy Ghost that

they may walk in the Spirit, and not yield to anything of the flesh. The mingling of the two things beguiles Christians into what is, after all, only the religion of the flesh. They think that an earthly system of religious forms must be right now, because it had His sanction in the Old Testament. They see that God acknowledged “a worldly sanctuary” once, and they reason thence for all times and places. Thus they get drawn into the “fair show in the flesh;” the more easily, as it habitually entails an absence of persecution, nay, credit with the world. People are sensible that you cannot raise the world to walk with you above its own level of sight and reason. But the moment you come down to meet the world, you are off Christian ground. A new nature is required. Faith is indispensable. The world has not this. You must descend to the world’s path, if you will take common action with the world. It is not that the world becomes Christian thereby, but that Christians thus become worldly. Such is the only issue of the attempt to join Christians with those that are not Christians in the service and worship of God.

Hear the solemn sentence: — “As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.” They want you to submit to these religious forms. The reason is that they dread suffering for Christ. The cross is the term of the old world, where the flesh was acknowledged; and the introduction of the new state of things where nothing but what is of the Holy Ghost is of value in the sight of God. He shows that selfishness, after all’ is at the bottom. When persons are walking with the world, there is never au easy conscience. Nothing so much pleases the world as to get

real Christians to walk with them. How humbling is the success of Satan in this. What God called out Christians for is to manifest a people happy in Christ, and yet having nothing but tribulation in the world. I am not speaking now of our common, every-day trials. If saints do foolish things and suffer from them like others, they have their share of the results of their own folly. But there are the trials that come upon a Christian because he is a Christian — to be despised and rejected, evil spoken of and calumniated, because he walks with God and has taken the side of God against the world; because he is a sharer of Christ's cross and waits for His glory, refusing therefore not only the world's bad, but its best things. This it is that the world is so angry at. They may talk about the faults of Christians; but were the same faults committed by the world, how soon and easily they would be got over! But where it is a Christian, there is that which makes them feel that, though the person may be weak and foolish, yet there is something above the world; and it is really this which makes them uneasy.

If the Christians in question here would only have submitted to be circumcised! But any one could be circumcised, even if unconverted. Only take a pledge with a worldly man, and he will be pleased, because you come down to a level that he can occupy with you. I am not meddling with the world's trying to reform the world; but I have much to say about the sin and the shame of Christians joining with the world in their efforts to stay the plague by means of man's promises and vows. It is altogether false ground and contrary to the gospel, which starts upon the utter badness of man's nature. Whereas the moment you do a work to improve

that nature, which the worldly man can equally do, (and he can sign the pledge as well as you,) it is plain that you have reached ground where the Christian gives up Christ as his one divinely-tempered weapon for dealing with man in the flesh, and is gone back to the bow and arrows, if I may so say, of moral restraint. Indeed, I cannot but view it as a lower thing even than circumcision, which was the type of a most blessed truth — the entire putting away of the flesh. But when Christ died, all that had been merely types, and had entirely failed as adequate remedies, were buried in His grave; and now He is risen and there is a new life in resurrection, which has nothing to say to the old, save to mortify it. The reality of life has come out, and this is what the Christian has to do with now. Christ has become his life and his object too. It is the great aim of the devil to get Christians to write some other name along with Christ on God's children: so that no matter what it is, whether you take circumcision as type of spiritual blessing, or the mere natural moral restraints of the present day, it is altogether a mistake as to the object for which God has called us out in this world. The Christian is outside that sphere; he is called into the place of grace. The magistrate's place is not one of grace, but of government, which, of course, calls for the punishment of evil. That is not grace. Grace is not law, but "If a man smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also." There would be an end of all justice if magistrates were to attempt to act thus. But while the Christian has no business out of the place of grace, he is boned to respect the government, and never to speak loweringly of dignities in the world. The better he knows his own privileges, the more he can afford to maintain the honour of the magistrate. He owns it so much the

more, because he does not covet it himself. He has a much better place himself; but if he knows the secret of his own joy and liberty in this world, let him at the same time acknowledge the higher powers which God has ordained in earthly rule. When persons are in the same sphere, there may be more or less rivalry; for men prefer to rule others rather than to be ruled themselves. But when a soul is entirely delivered from the world, he can the more heartily own what is of God here below, and see the wisdom of His order there. It is on this ground that the Holy Ghost always presses the Christian's obedience of the law, and honour to the king or other governor he may be under.

But to return to our subject. The apostle further shows that, after all, these zealots for circumcision did not keep the law. They only observed it in part, with no little inconsistency, however hot their feeling against the advocates of Christian liberty. This is always the case. Those who insist on the perpetuity of the sabbath, how do they keep it? It is not only that they never heed the true day; but supposing the Lord's-day were really the same as the sabbath, do they observe it according to the law? Not at all. They will tell you that Christianity, besides changing the day, has modified the mode of its observance, that the gospel mitigates the severity of God's law, etc. If this be not to make void the law through unbelief, it is hard to say what is. I deny their facts, doctrines, and conclusions. Christianity, so far from attenuating the law, or reducing its sanctions, is that which alone gives the law its full value — "By faith we establish the law." (Rom. 3:31) The doctrine of faith, instead of weakening the law's obligation, illustrates and maintains it to the utmost. But the establishment of the

law, of which the apostle speaks in Romans 3, has no reference whatever to the question of a rule by which the Christian has to walk. The chapter treats of man's ruin and God's righteousness, not of practice, and shows that faith upholds the authority of the law in the cross of Christ, which owns men's just and total condemnation, and is the basis of divine justifying righteousness, which is revealed to and becomes the portion of the believer. The law's curse fell upon Christ, which has thus been magnified to the uttermost, its full sentence having been exhausted upon the head of the Son of God. Hence, whether you look at God or man, or the Saviour, faith establishes the law, as nothing else could. But as to the Lord's-day, far from being the same as the sabbath, it is the first day of the week, not the seventh, and rests on quite different foundations. When you come to test the would-be teachers of the law, their zeal is soon seen to break down in practice; and they are easily convicted of introducing changes and modifications in order to suit the time, country, climate, and people, i.e., to suit themselves in the things of God. This theory of mitigation, and of a flexible law, can never stand a fair scrutiny. On the other hand, those who hold that the Lord's-day is a new thing, in no way connected either with creation or with the law, are under no difficulty; because they see that the same God who sanctified the sabbath originally, and gave the law to Israel, was pleased to put special honour on the first day of the week, in commemoration of redemption accomplished in the death and resurrection of Christ; but they see it as having its own proper character, and not as confounded with the sabbath. The Lord's-day calls for no mere rest which you may share with your ox or your ass; and so far from its due honour consisting chiefly in bodily quiet, I

believe that if a Christian were on that day enabled to walk twenty sabbath-days' journeys on special services for the Lord, he would not only be at liberty to do that work, but that it would be most acceptable to the Lord. Each day is separated from other days by divine authority; but in other respects they differ as decidedly as law from grace, or the old creation from the new.

"For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law, but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh." That is most true in the present time. The truth is not the test in the religious world, nor Christ Himself, nor His service. Refuse their party or their idols, and be prepared for reproach, calumny, scorn, and hatred. Yield to their Judaizing, and you may hold blasphemous doctrine with impunity as far as they are concerned. Touch their abuse of the law, and their cry is, "They have taken away my lord, and I know not where they have laid him." The law is their lord yet more than Christ. I am now alluding to a literal fact in the most popular organ of the so-called Evangelical, but in truth the legal, party of the day.

And now the apostle, having spoken of the evil, turns to the blessed side: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." They were glorifying in what would exalt human nature; because in that way they could get the world and its multitudes to unite with them. In chapter iii. the cross of Christ is viewed as deliverance from the law, because Christ was thereon made a curse for us. A man who believed in Christ, who owns Him as the Son of God — would you deny that he had everlasting life? But unless such an one receives tee doctrine of the cross

intelligently, and applies it to his position, he is still more or less under the law, and does not understand that he is completely brought out of the old condition of things into a new ground.

In Galatians 5 the apostle applies the doctrine of the cross to the flesh, and shows that they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. Here I find that my flesh is a thing I am entitled to regard as done with before God, no less than the law.

Now, in Galatians 6, comes in the third thing, the world. You have a regular gradation — freed from the law which would affect the conscience of a godly person. Then, when a man is free from that anxiety, comes in the question of the flesh, with its affections and lusts. But this, he is told, was all judged in the cross of Christ. Therefore, as a part of the comfort God gives me, I am entitled, as a matter of faith and not of mere feeling, to know, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts." It does not say, "They are crucifying it," as if it were something going on; but it is done in receiving a crucified Christ. In God's sight, and now to faith also, their nature was nailed to the tree, and is done with before God; anti now they have got a new nature: as St. Paul says, "Not I, but Christ liveth in me." The old nature that we have still exists, of course; but to faith God has already done with it in the cross of Christ; so that the business of the christian man is to occupy himself, not with mere restraints, but with Christ; which fills the soul, by the energy of the Spirit, with all that is good, draws it out into what is lovely, and, in short, is the true power of Christian holiness. If a man is occupied with what is good, he will hate his flesh; but it is only occupation with Christ that gives the soul

power thus to put the sentence of God upon the flesh. Now comes the third and last thing in Christian experience; for you will find men who know somewhat of deadness to the law and to the flesh, but who still think that it is the duty of the Christian man in this world to serve God in his generation. But how would God have Himself to be served now? Never by anything that contradicts the cross of Christ. The service of the Christian is to be founded on the cross; and what does the cross declare about the world? That it is now at open war with God. Ever since the cross of Christ, God has no alliance with the world. Before that, the world was allowed: and therefore it was not wrong for Joseph to be governor in Egypt, nor for Daniel to sit in the gate of the king of Babylon. But it is utterly ignorant to reason from what was tolerated then to what pleases God now that the cross of His Son is a fact.

God does not ignore the cross, if Christians do. The very same cross of Christ that is my salvation, my deliverance from the law and the flesh, shows me that I have no part with this world, save as a blessed stranger passing through it. We may have occupations that are all quite right; but that is not at all what you can call a thing of the world. The Lord lived here, died here, rose here, eat and drank in this world; but He never was of the world: and so it is and should be with the Christian. Our Lord did not form such a part and parcel of this world as that His appearance in it or departure from it ruffled the stream for a moment. He would not have been missed in the world; and the moment that a Christian becomes an integral part of the motive power which carries on the wheels of the world, all is out of course, as far as his allegiance to Christ goes. A Christian ought to be the

means of constant blessing in this world. But how, and of what character? Bearing the testimony of Christ, of his Saviour; but as He never sought His own things — was always doing good, yet doing it as the will of His Father — always acting upon motives that were not of the world, but from above — never uniting with men's plans for the purpose of bettering man, but realizing that the world was God's enemy, and yet that God's love was sending Him into it to do them good: such was Christ, and so should it be with the Christian. A Christian's business is to be the epistle of Christ. So that the one clue and test for what comes before a person, is this: will my doing this or that be acting as an epistle of Christ? But in order to know what is consistent with an epistle of Christ, I must search His ways in the words of the Holy Ghost. There is always light in Scripture to show what is His mind for the present moment, and what it is that has passed away with the olden time, which belonged to the law and the world and to Israel, who were God's ancient witness in the world. But the Christian is the present witness of Christ, and is not of the world, although in it. This is the great means of trying our ways, and thus finding out how far we glory in the cross. That is, you have them on totally opposite principles. The cross of Christ is that which first of all crucifies the Christian to the world, puts him entirely outside it as one saved out of it; but also the world is crucified to him. There you see the world with all its unremoved guilt, ignorant of the Father, spite of the coming of the Son. So there cannot be the least common ground between a Christian and the world; any more than there could be for this country if it were at open war with any of its neighbours. If this be true, does it

not show how little God's children realize their Christian position, as thus defined by the cross of Christ!

Peace made by the blood of the cross is more or less preached; but as to the moral power of the cross and its bearing upon the law, the flesh, or the world, there is hardly an atom save in the way of motive. The consequence is, that such Christians can, with a good conscience, talk about the cross, and, at the same time, still maintain what God has already judged and put away for ever. Hence the importance of full Christian deliverance is unknown — the ground-truths which ought to be understood by the babe. For the Epistle to the Galatians does not take up the highest branch of Christian truth, but rather the indispensable foundations of Christianity.

The apostle now brings in another point. To speak merely of being crucified to the world would not have been enough. There is more than that in Christ. "For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." People may boast about their forms or their no-forms; but whatever it may be, it is all wrong, unless you have got positive, substantial blessing from God; unless you have the cross of Christ and the new creation. As a Christian, I belong to a system already set up in Christ, in the presence of God. I know what my new nature is when I think of Christ. I see Him risen from the dead and in glory; the perfect delight of God and of all who surround God. And there all Christians are going to be; and this in substance they have got now, the Holy Ghost Himself being the earnest of glory. For it is not merely what they are going to shine in, but they have the blessing before the blessing is manifested. The Christian possesses the

new creature in perfection in Christ. “He that hath the Son hath life.” It is called here the “new creation;” because it is not merely looked at as life found, but contrasted with the old, which had to do with the world. This implies not only the person, but the work of Christ. The grand work of redemption is accomplished; God’s law had its free course, and righteousness is established; the voice of condemnation is never to be heard again by virtue of the cross of the Just One, who suffered for our sake. But then He is risen from the dead, and has entered upon a new and blessed existence as a risen man before God. And this is the nature which He communicates to us. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” The consequence is that, having died but being risen, He communicates that very life which was in Him. “I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly.” The more abundant life is this “new creature,” or life in resurrection.

“And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.” In the first expression, “as many as walk according to this rule,” he specially looks, I think, at the Gentile believers, such as the Galatians were. “this rule” is the rule of the new creation — Christ Himself. He adds, “peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.” The only part of Israel acknowledged consists of the real believing Jews. “Israel of God” seems to be used here, not as a general phrase for every saint, but for the believing ones in Israel — those Jews who had repudiated their own works and found shelter only in Christ Jesus. Two parties are spoken of, and not one only. “As many as walk according

to this rule," are rather the Gentile believers; and the "Israel of God" are the Jewish saints, not the mere literal Israel, but "the Israel of God;" the Israelites indeed, whom grace made willing to receive the Saviour.

He then adds, "From henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Their fleshly wisdom had brought in confusion and every evil work, law instead of love, questions about his ministry, etc. "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." He had been scourged and put in prison. What mark of indignity had not been put upon him? These, and not circumcision, are "the marks of the Lord Jesus." Just as a slave in olden time used to bear the name of his master burnt into his flesh, so, he means, he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. — Let others bear or seek what they may, these are marks that I value. — They were the sufferings that he had endured for the sake of Christ and the gospel. Nothing more sweet and touching, but, at the same time, what a sweeping condemnation of those self-exalting men, who took their ease, in the presence of one whose life was suffering for Christ!

"Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen." It is indeed most gracious and dignified. He asks not that they might feel the thunders of that law under which they desired to put themselves; but that "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ should be with their spirit," showing how thoroughly he felt the vantage-ground which grace gave him — how he could meet all these attacks upon himself — how he could point to the scars of his honourable warfare, if they talked of their circumcision, though he would boast of nothing but Christ's cross. Our wisdom is Christ, as our

folly is ourselves. The Lord grant then that we may learn better to know our true wisdom and to walk in it; and while holding fast the truth, that we may desire earnestly the blessing of those who oppose it, and seek the deliverance of every soul around us. The Epistle to the Galatians is the death-blow to the religions world, root and branch, as it is to the revival or continuance of the same system, which the Apostle Paul was then so strongly denouncing, and which he shows to be the enemy, not of the saints only but of the cross of Christ.