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## NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST JESUS

By Octavius Winslow, 1862

### PREFACE

It would have been no difficult task to have expanded the following pages—the substance of which was originally delivered by the author in the course of his stated ministrations, and in his usual extemporaneous mode of address—much beyond their present limit. His dread, however, of inflicting upon the public a volume, overgrown and unreadable—precious and alluring as was its theme—constrained him greatly to curtail his work; thus, he fears, exposing himself to the charge of having swept lightly and rapidly over subjects the greatness and importance of which demanded profounder thought, and more elaborate discussion. The portion of Holy Writ he has undertaken—it may be deemed somewhat too presumptuously—to expound, must be regarded as a mine of sacred wealth, as inexhaustible in its resources, as those resources are indescribable in their beauty, and in their excellence and worth, priceless.

It would, perhaps, be impossible to select from the Bible a single chapter in which were crowded so much sublime, evangelical, and sanctifying truth as this eighth of Romans. It is not only all gospel, but it may be said to contain the whole gospel. In this brief but luminous space is embraced an epitome of all the privileges and duties, trials and consolations, discouragements and hopes of the Christian. Commencing with his elevated position of *No Condemnation from God*, it conducts him along a path where flowers bloom, and honey drops, and fragrance breathes, and music floats, and light and shade blend in beautiful and exquisite harmony to the radiant point of *no separation from Christ*. And amid the beauties and sweets, the melodies and sunshine of this glorious landscape of truth, thus spread out in all its

panoramic extent and magnificence before his eye, the believer in Jesus is invited to roam, to revel, and delight himself.

May the Holy and Eternal Spirit impart to the reader, and, through his prayers, increasingly to the writer, the personal possession and heart-sanctifying experience of the Divine treasures of this precious portion of God's Word. And, if this simple and imperfect outline may but supply a faint and glimmering light, guiding the reader to a more prayerful and thorough exploration of this mine of the "deep things of God," thus leading to the discovery of new and yet richer veins, the Author will not regret that the oil which fed the lamp has been drawn from his own exhausting, yet holy and delightful studies.

And now to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as unto the Triune Jehovah, be all honor and praise forever. Amen.

Leamington, April, 1862.

## **CHAPTER 1.**

### **No Condemnation.**

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:1.

In these words the inspired Apostle supplies us with the key to the great and precious truths embodied in the chapter, upon the unfolding of which, as guided by the Holy Spirit, we propose to enter. They contain the leading proposition, which, thus distinctly enunciated, he proceeds with his usual vigor of mind, perspicuity of reasoning, and gentleness of spirit, clothing his thoughts with the most eloquent diction, to confirm and illustrate. He had been descanting, with much feeling and power, upon the painful and ceaseless conflict waging between the antagonist principles of the regenerate heart, illustrating it, as is evident from his use of the first person, by a reference to his own personal experience as a Christian. The question, mooted by some, whether Paul delineated a state preceding, or subsequent to, conversion, ought not, we think, to allow a moment's doubt. Since, from the fourteenth verse to the close of the chapter, he unfolds the operation of a law which only finds scope for its exercise in the soul of the renewed man, and with whose hidden and mysterious workings, the experience of the saints has in all ages

coincided. But if this argument still leaves the mind perplexed, the opening of the present chapter would appear sufficiently conclusive to set the question at rest. Having portrayed with a master pen—himself sitting for the picture—the spiritual struggles of the children of God, he then proceeds, in the passage under consideration, to apply the divine consolation and support appropriate to a condition so distressing and humiliating. Lifting them from the region of conflict and cloud, he places them upon an elevation towering above the gloom and strife of the battle-field, around whose serene, sunlight summit gathered the first dawning of eternal glory.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." The transition from the desponding tone of the seventh chapter, to the triumphant language of the eighth, may appear somewhat startling and abrupt; yet it is perfectly easy, logical, and natural. The verse before us is an inference fairly deducible from the whole of the preceding discussion; and is, in fact, the grand conclusion toward which the Apostle had throughout the argument been aiming to arrive. Clear is it, then, as the sun, that if to the saints of God belong the conflict of sin and death, over whose thralldom they mourn; to them also equally belongs the deliverance from the curse and the condemnation, in whose victory they rejoice. Let us now address ourselves to the exposition of this sublime and solemn theme, in humble reliance upon the Divine teaching of the Spirit, pledged and vouchsafed to guide us into all truth.

'Condemnation' is a word of tremendous import; and it is well fairly to look at its meaning, that we may the better understand the wondrous grace that has delivered us from its power. Echoing through the gloomy halls of a human court, it falls with a fearful knell upon the ear of the criminal, and thrills with sympathy and horror the bosom of each spectator of the scene. But in the court of Divine Justice it is uttered with a meaning and solemnity infinitely significant and impressive. To that court every individual is cited. Before that bar each one must be arraigned. "Conceived in sin, and shaped in iniquity," man enters the world under arrest—an indicted criminal, a rebel manacled, and doomed to die. Born under the tremendous sentence originally denounced against sin: "In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die;" or, "You shall die the death," he enters life under a present condemnation, the prelude of a future condemnation. From it he can discover no avenue of escape. He lies down, and he rises up—he repairs to the mart of business, and to the haunt of pleasure, a guilty, sentenced, and condemned man. "Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do

them," is the terrible sentence branded upon his brow. And should the summons to eternity arrest him amid his dreams, his speculations, and his revels, the adversary would deliver him to the judge, the judge to the officer, and the officer would consign him over to all the pangs and horrors of the "second" and "eternal death." "He that believes not, is condemned already." My dear reader, without real conversion this is your present state, and must be your future doom.

But from this woe all believers in Christ are delivered. The sentence of death under which, in common with others, they lay, is absolved; the curse is removed; the indictment is quashed; and "there is, therefore, now no condemnation"

But let us, for the better understanding of this subject, consider what this condition does not imply. It does not include deliverance from the indwelling of sin, nor exemption from Divine correction, nor the absence of self-accusation; still less does it suppose that there is nothing for which the believer deserves to die. All this exists where yet no condemnation exists. The battle with indwelling evil is still waged, and the loving chastisement of a Father is still experienced, and the self-condemnation is still felt, and daily in the holiest life there is still transpiring, that which, were God strict to mark iniquities, merits and would receive eternal woe; and yet the declaration stands untouched and unimpeached—"No condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." This is the blessed condition we are now more fully to describe.

The freedom of the believer is just what it is declared to be—entire exemption from condemnation. From all which that word of significant and solemn import implies, he is, by his relation to Christ, delivered. Sin does not condemn him, the law does not condemn him, the curse does not condemn him, hell does not condemn him, God does not condemn him. He is under no power from these, beneath whose accumulated and tremendous woe all others wither. A brief and simple argument will, perhaps, be sufficient to establish this fact. The pardon of sin necessarily includes the negation of its condemnatory power. There being no sin legally alleged, there can be no condemnation justly pronounced. Now, by the sacrifice of Christ all the sins of the Church are entirely put away. He, the sinless Lamb of God, took them up and bore them away into a land of oblivion, where even the Divine mind fails to recall them. "How forcible are right words!" Listen to those which declare this wondrous fact: "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins." "You have cast all my sins

behind your back." "Having forgiven you all trespasses" "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." The revoking of the sentence of the law must equally annihilate its condemnatory force. The obedience and death of Christ met the claims of that law, both in its preceptive and punitive character. A single declaration of God's Word throws a flood of light upon this truth—"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The sentence of the law thus falling upon the Surety, who was "made under the law, that he might redeem those who were under the law," there can be no condemnation from it to those who have taken shelter in him. Thus, then, is it evident that both sin and the law are utterly powerless to condemn a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have hinted, that the perfection of Christ's satisfaction supplies the meritorious and procuring cause of our non-condemnation. This truth cannot be too frequently repeated, nor too prominently kept in view. No legal obedience—no personal merit or worthiness of the sinner whatever—is taken into the account of his discharge from condemnation. This exalted position can only be reached by an expedient that harmonizes with the attributes of God, and thus upholds, in undimmed luster, the majesty and honor of the Divine government. God will pardon sin, and justify the sinner, but it must be by a process supremely glorifying to himself. How, then, could a creature-satisfaction, the most perfect that man, or the most peerless that angels could offer, secure this result? Impossible! But the case, strange and difficult though it is, is met, fully, adequately met, by the satisfaction of Jesus. The Son of God became the Son of man. He presents himself to the Father in the character of the church's substitute. The Father, beholding in him the Divinity that supplies the merit, and the humanity that yields the obedience and endures the suffering, accepts the Savior, and acquits the sinner. Hence the freedom of the believer from condemnation. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation." It is the existence of a present condition. It is the enjoyment of a present immunity. "He is now free from condemnation, not as if the sentence of acquittal were still in dependence, but as if the sentence had already passed, not as if he had to look, perhaps doubtfully and ambiguously, forward to some future day, when a verdict of exculpation shall be pronounced upon him; but as if he stood exculpated before God even now, and even now might rejoice in the forgiveness of all his trespasses." (Chalmers) It is the simple belief of this fact that brings instant peace to the bosom. A present discharge from condemnation must produce a present joy. Open the iron-bound door of the condemned cell, and by the dim light that struggles through its bars read the sovereign's free pardon to the felon, stretched, pale and emaciated, upon his pallet of straw; and the radiance you have kindled in that gloomy dungeon,

and the transport you have created in that felon's heart, will be a present realization. You have given him back a present life; you have touched a thousand chords in his bosom, which awake a present harmony; and where, just previous; reigned in that bosom sullen, grim despair, now reigns the sunlight joyousness of a present hope. Christian! there is now no condemnation for you! Be yours, then, a present and a full joy. "Christ has made atonement, and with it God is satisfied; and if so, well may you be satisfied—delighting yourselves greatly in the abundance of peace, and going forth even now in the light and liberty of your present enlargement."

"To those who are in Christ Jesus." We here touch a vital and profound truth. Rich and accumulative as the passages are which offer their aid in its elucidation, we despair of conveying to other than a mind experimentally acquainted with the truth itself, anything like an adequate representation of the imposing magnitude and glory of the condition. *To be in Christ may really be felt, but not easily described.* The first view, then, which we present, is that which illustrates the mystical indwelling of the church in Christ, when he stood as its substitute. As all the nations of the world were federally and mystically in Adam when he fell; so the "holy nation," the Church of God, was federally and mystically in the Second Adam, "the Lord from heaven," when in the counsel of God he presented himself as its Surety, and when in the fullness of time he appeared, all robed for the sacrifice, to discharge the engagement. Approach that cross, and what do you behold? Is it that you see a guilty one, suffering—a criminal, worthy of death? No; you see the sinless Son of God bearing the sin, and, by consequence, the condemnation of his people. And in that wondrous spectacle, you see brought to the bar of Infinite Justice—tried, sentenced, and condemned, in the person of their surety—all those who are in Christ Jesus. In Christ they were chosen—to Christ they were betrothed—with Christ they were united—by Christ they are saved,—and, sitting with Christ on his throne, they shall reign with him forever and ever.

But, there is the open, manifest being in Christ, on which we must lay especial stress in our attempted description of this blessed state. "Preserved in Christ Jesus," the sinner is eventually "called in Christ Jesus." "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature." An external and nominal profession of the Gospel may exist, and exist, too, in connection with great knowledge, and fervent zeal, and costly sacrifice, and morality of a high order, apart from this internal change. Such a character our Lord describes in these words: "Every branch in me that bears not fruit he takes away." Such an individual is in

**Christ by an outward profession only. But a state of non-condemnation implies a being in Christ in a far higher sense. It includes the great truth of Christ being in us—"I in them." "We are in him who is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ." Thus it is a mutual in-dwelling—Christ in us, and we in Christ. Here is our security. The believer is in Christ as Jacob was in the garment of the elder brother when Isaac kissed him, and he "smelled the smell of the clothing, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed." He is in Christ, as the poor homicide was within the city of refuge when pursued by the avenger of blood, but who could not overtake and slay. He is in Christ as Noah was inclosed within the ark, with the heavens darkening above him, and the waters heaving beneath him, yet with not a drop of the flood penetrating his vessel, nor a blast of the storm disturbing the serenity of his spirit. How expressive are these scriptural emblems of the perfect security of a believer in Christ! He is clothed with the garment of the Elder Brother, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, "which is unto all, and upon all those who believe." On that garment the Father's hands are placed; in that robe the person of the believer is accepted; it is to God "as the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed:" the blessing of the heavenly birthright is his—and for him there is no condemnation. Pursued by the avenger of blood, the threatenings of a condemning law, he has reached the city of refuge, the Lord Jesus Christ. Fearful and trembling, yet believing and hoping, he has crossed the sacred threshold, and in an instant he is safe—and for him there is no condemnation. Fleeing from the gathering storm—"the wrath which is to come,"—he has availed himself of the open door of the sacred ark—the crucified Savior—has entered, God shutting him in—and for him there is no condemnation. Yes, Christ Jesus is our sanctuary, beneath whose shadow we are safe. Christ Jesus is our strong tower, within whose embattlements no avenger can threaten. Christ Jesus is our hiding-place from the wind, and covert from the tempest; and not one drop of "the wrath to come" can fall upon the soul that is in him. O how completely accepted, and how perfectly secure, the sinner who is in Christ Jesus! He feels he is saved on the basis of a law, whose honor is vindicated; through the clemency of a righteous Sovereign, whose holiness is secured; and through the mercy of a gracious God, the glory of whose moral government is eternally and illustriously exhibited. And now is his head lifted up above his enemies round about him; for there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Reader, are you in Christ Jesus? Is this your condition? We repeat the solemn declaration—"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things have passed away; behold, all things are become new." Are you that new creature? Prove, examine, and ascertain. For if you are not born again of the Spirit, be**

well assured that you are still under the curse and sentence of the law. And while condemnation, in dark and gloomy characters, is written upon the brow of every unbelieving sinner out of Christ; Christ has said of all who have fled out of themselves to him, "He who hears my word, and believes on Him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

"Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." We have here the *character* of all those who have secured, by faith in the Lord Jesus, their full discharge from the sentence of death. Thus, in the passage under consideration are clearly stated, the *cause* and the consequence of the believer's discharge. It has been shown, that our being in Christ is the ground of our not being in condemnation. It then follows, that as a *fruit*—a *consequence* of our immunity from condemnation—is our walking after the Spirit. Thus, while justification and sanctification are separate and distinct conditions, they yet are cognate truths, and co-exist in the experience of all the regenerate. The deduction which the Apostle here makes of holiness from acceptance; or rather, the order of sequence which he observes, is worthy of the reader's closest attention. Its lack of observance has kept numbers of sincere seekers of Christ in the cold dreary region of embarrassment and doubt, who, but for thus overlooking the order observed, or perhaps rather, by reversing that order, might have fully received into their souls that "kingdom which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." Their great error has been an attempt to shape their course, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, *before* having ascertained their being in Christ and consequent freedom from condemnation.

In plainer language, their placing sanctification in advance of justification; in substituting the effect for the cause; in looking to the Spirit rather than to Christ. How painfully distressing is the struggle of such an one! Sincere and earnest in his desire to love God, but with his back turned upon the cross, and his face towards the "mountain that burns with fire," he can see everything in God to awaken his fear, but nothing to inspire his love. He longs to obey God; but, lacking the impelling motive to obedience, he fails in every attempt. He sighs for rest; but his incessant effort to recover the ground perpetually sliding from beneath his feet, places that rest further and further beyond his reach. He would sincerely be holy; but, seeking his holiness in the way of *doing*, and not in the way of *believing*, he never attains it. But let us explain the words.

**"To walk after the flesh" is to regulate the life and conduct according to our fallen and depraved nature. The "flesh," which stands for the corrupt desires and propensities, is the sole guide of the unregenerate. They are in the flesh, they are of the flesh, and they live according to the flesh. "The works of the flesh are manifest," and these they do. But the converse of this is the characteristic of all true believers. They "walk after the Spirit." Possessing, in common with the unregenerate, a fleshly nature, in which there dwells no good thing; they also partake of a new and divine nature, of which the unregenerate do not. Renewed by the Spirit, inhabited by the Spirit, sanctified by the Spirit, led by the Spirit, they aim to regulate their life according to his divine dictates, influence, and teaching. The bent of their minds is holiness: this they breathe after, pray and labor for, as the one great purpose of their being. That they are opposed by the flesh, and by it are often foiled, wounded, and cast down, cannot yet destroy the divine principle of their soul, any more than a false attraction can destroy the magnetic power of the needle. That there should ever be an occasional unevenness and irregularity in the walk of any of the Lord's people, is a matter of the profoundest humiliation; yet even in the stumblings and falls of a righteous man, it cannot in truth be said that he 'walk after the flesh,' seeing that he rises again, restored by the grace of Christ; and his desires and breathings after the Spirit are, perhaps, all the deeper and stronger for that fall. An unrenewed man falls, and where he falls he lies. "A just man falls seven times, and rises up again," and "walks," perhaps more softly than ever, "after the Spirit." "It is the direction of that sovereign faculty, the will, which explains the difference. If this be enlisted on the side of the flesh, as it is with every unconverted man, then he sins wilfully. If this be enlisted on the side of the Spirit, as it is with every man who has truly turned him unto the Lord Jesus Christ, then he may sin accidentally; and in some moment of sleep or of surprise he may be overtaken; and before the will, as it were, had time to rally and to recover, some outpost may have been carried, and even some advantage have been gained, to the length of a most humiliating overthrow. But deep is the grief that is thereby awakened, and strenuous is the resistance that is thereby summoned into the future warfare; and heavy is that mourning of sackcloth and of ashes with which the soul of the penitent offender is afflicted; and though he has stumbled in the way of temptation, he yet utterly refuses to walk therein—so giving testimony to the mode in which the leading tendencies of his spirit have most painfully and most offensively been thwarted, by the momentary power and assault of his great adversary; and that the whole drift of his choosing, and deliberating, and purposing faculties is indeed on the side of God and on the side of holiness." (Chalmers) What a high and privileged walk, then, is the believer's!**

**While the slaves of the flesh are groveling amid their darkness and chains, he is walking after the Spirit, soaring and exulting in holy light and liberty.**

**The subject is suggestive of much important practical instruction.**

**What a ground of *rejoicing* does it afford you who are the saints of God! You may see within and around you—in your soul, in your family, and your circumstances—much that saddens, and wounds, and discourages you; but behold the truth which more than counterbalances it all—your freedom from condemnation. What if you are poor—you are not condemned! What if you are afflicted—you are not condemned! What if you are tempted—you are not condemned! What if you are assailed and judged by others, you yet are not forsaken and condemned by God; and ought you not, then, to rejoice? Go to the condemned cell, and assure the criminal awaiting his execution, that you bear from his sovereign a pardon; and what though he emerge from his imprisonment and his manacles, to battle with poverty, with sorrow and contempt, will he murmur and repine, that in the redemption of his forfeited life, there is no clause that exempts him from the ills to which that life is linked? No! life to him is so sweet and precious a thing, that though you return it trammelled with poverty, and beclouded with shame, you have yet conferred upon him a boon which creates sunshine all within and around him. And why should not we "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," for whom, "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," there is now no condemnation? Christ has "redeemed our life from destruction;" and although it is "through much tribulation we are to enter the kingdom," yet shall we not quicken our pace to that kingdom, rejoicing as we go, that "there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus?" "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."**

**Be earnest and diligent in making sure to yourself your discharge from the sentence and penalty of the law. Sue out the great fact in the Lord's own court by fervent prayer and simple faith. Your Surety has cancelled your debt, and purchased your exemption from death. Avail yourself of the comfort and the stimulus of the blessing. You may be certain, yes, quite certain, of its truth. No process is more easy. It is but to look from off yourself to Christ, and to believe with all your heart that he came into the world to save sinners, and assurance is yours. The order is, "We believe, and are sure." Oh, do not leave this matter to a bare peradventure. Make sure of your union with Christ, and you may be sure of no condemnation from Christ.**

**As sin is the great condemning cause, let us aim to condemn sin, if we would rank with those for whom there is no condemnation. Most true is it, that either sin must be condemned by us, or we must be condemned for sin. The honor of the Divine government demands that a condemnatory sentence be passed, either upon the transgression, or upon the transgressor. And shall we hesitate? Is it a matter of doubt to which our preference shall be given? Which is best, that sin should die, or that we should die? Will the question allow a moment's consideration? Surely not, unless we are so enamored with sin as calmly and deliberately to choose death to life, hell to heaven. "The wages of sin is death." Sin unrepented, unforgiven, unpardoned, is the certain prelude to eternal death. Everlasting destruction follows in its turbid wake. There is a present hell in sin, for which the holy shun it; and there is a future hell in sin, for which all should dread it. If, then, we would be among "the pure in heart who shall see God," if we would lift up our faces with joy before the Judge at the last great day, if we would be freed from the final and terrible sentence of condemnation, oh, let us be holy, "denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world." Oh, let us condemn sin, that sin may not condemn us. And let us draw the motive that constrains us, and the power that helps us, from that cross where Jesus "condemned sin in the flesh."**

**In this great matter, there is an especial blessing attached to the act of self-condemnation. Self-condemnation averts God's condemnation. When a penitent sinner truly, humbly, graciously, sits in judgment upon himself, the Lord will never sit in judgment upon him. "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged of the Lord." The penitent publican, who stood afar off, wrapped in the spirit of self-condemnation, retired from his presence a justified man. The proud, self-righteous Pharisee, who marched boldly to the altar and justified himself, went forth from God's presence a condemned man. When God sees a penitent sinner arraigning, judging, condemning, loathing himself, he exclaims, "I do not condemn you, go and sin no more." He who judges and condemns himself upon God's footstool, shall be acquitted and absolved from God's throne. The Lord give unto us this secret spirit of self-judgment. Such was Job's, when in deep contrition he declared, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Such was David's, when he penitentially confessed, "Against you, you only have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight." Such was Peter's, when he vehemently exclaimed, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man." Such was Isaiah's when he plaintively cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of**

unclean lips." Such was the publican's, when he humbly prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner." O lovely posture! O sacred spirit of self-abhorrence, of self-condemnation! The Holy Spirit works it in the heart, and this stamps it as so precious, so salutary, and so safe. The great day of the Lord will unveil blessings passing all thought, and glories passing all imagination, to the soul who beneath the cross lies prostrate, in the spirit of self-condemnation. The judgment day of the self-condemning soul is on this side of eternity; while the judgment day of the self-justifying soul, is on the other side of eternity. And oh, how terrible will that judgment be!

How strong the consolation flowing from this truth to the believer in Jesus! No condemnation is the ground of all comfort to the *suffering* Christian. What a mighty breakwater is this condition to the rolling surge of sorrow, which else might flow in upon and immerse the soul! Let it be your aim to improve it on every occasion of suffering and trial. God may afflict, but he will never condemn you. Chastisements are not judgments; afflictions are not condemnations. Sickness, and bereavement, and low estate, based upon a condition of non-condemnation, you can welcome and patiently bear, since they are not the fore-castings of a coming storm, but the distillings of a mercy-cloud sailing athwart the azure sky of a soul in Christ. The fiery trials which purify our faith have not a spark in them of that "unquenchable fire" that will consume the condemned hereafter. Oh, what are the crosses and the discomforts of this present world, if at last we are kept out of hell? And oh, what are the riches, and honors, and comforts of this life, if at last we are shut out of heaven? At the bottom of that cup of sinful pleasure, which sparkles in the worldling's hand, and which with such zest and glee he quaffs, there lies eternal condemnation—the death-worm feeds at the root of all his good. But at the bottom of this cup of sorrow, now trembling and darkling in the hand of the suffering Christian, bitter and forbidding as it is, there is no condemnation—eternal glory is at the root of all his evil. And in this will you not rejoice? It is not only your holy duty, but it is your high privilege to rejoice. Your whole life not only may be, but ought to be a sweetly-tuned psalm, a continual anthem of thanksgiving and praise, pouring forth its swelling notes to the God of your salvation; since, beyond the cloudy scene of your present pilgrimage there unveils the light and bliss of celestial glory, on whose portal you read as you pass within—NO CONDEMNATION. Unless, then, you either distrust or disparage this your joyous condition and blessed hope, you must, in the gloomiest hour, and from the innermost depths of your soul, exultingly exclaim—"He is near that justifies me; who will contend with me? Let us stand together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me.

**Behold, the Lord God will help me! who is he that shall condemn me?"**

## **CHAPTER 2.**

### **Freedom from the Law of Sin and Death.**

**"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." Romans 8:2.**

**This passage has been regarded by some sacred critics as difficult of interpretation; one of whom furnishes three different meanings of the text, and then leaves the reader to make his own selection in the case. We think, however, that a simple examination of the words, taken in their connection, will remove the obscurity which may be supposed to veil them. The evident design of the Apostle is, to furnish an argument in support of the leading proposition he had just laid down, namely, the believer's deliverance from condemnation. There is clearly a connection between that declaration and the passage under consideration. "For the law of the Spirit of life." But the main difficulty seems to be in the meaning of the terms employed in the text. By some expositors, the "law of the Spirit of life" is interpreted of the influence or control exerted by the Spirit of God over the minds of the regenerate, emancipating them from the curse and tyranny of sin, and supplying them with a new authoritative enactment for their obedience and regulation, as those whose course is guided by the Spirit. "The law of sin and death," is by the same authority interpreted of the contesting power of sin, leading to death and condemnation; having its throne in the heart, and from its governing and despotic power, maintaining a supreme and dire sway over the whole moral man. The freedom, therefore, which the law of the Spirit of life confers upon those who are bound by the law of sin and death, is just the supremacy of one principle over the force of another principle: the triumph of an opposing law over an antagonist law.**

**But the interpretation which we propose for the adoption of the reader, is that which regards the "law of the Spirit of life," as describing the Gospel of Christ, frequently denominated a "law"—and emphatically so in this instance—because of the emancipation which it confers from the Mosaic code, called the "law of sin and death," as by it is the knowledge of sin, and through it death is threatened as the penalty of its transgression. With this brief, but, we believe, correct explanation of the terms of the passage, we proceed to**

consider the exalted liberty of the believer in Jesus, of which it speaks,; tracing that freedom to the instrument by whose agency it is secured. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death."

In the preceding chapter, we were led to regard all who were outside of Christ, as under a present, and as exposed to a future condemnation. Not less awful is the condition of the unconverted, as depicted in the passage before us. Reverse the state of the believer and you have the exact state of the unbeliever. Is the believer in Christ a free man? the unbeliever is a slave. Is the believer justified? the unbeliever is condemned. Is the believer a living soul? the unbeliever is a lifeless soul. Is the believer a reconciled son? the unbeliever is a hostile rebel. Is the believer an heir of glory? the unbeliever is an heir of hell. Between these two conditions there is no neutral ground. You are, my reader, either for Christ, or you are against Christ. In this great controversy between Christ and Satan, you are not an indifferent and unconcerned spectator. The Prince of Light or the prince of darkness claims your service, and presses you into the conflict. Oh, it is a matter of the greatest moment that you decide to which law you are bound—the "law of life," or "the law of death."

But in what sense is the believer "free from the law of sin and death?" As a covenant he is free from it. How clear and impressive is the reasoning of the Apostle on this point! "Know you not, brethren, (for I speak to those who know the law) how that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband, so long as he lives ; but if the husband is dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband." The believer's union to Christ, represented under the figure of a marriage covenant, frees him from the condemnatory power of this law. He looks not to it for life; he rests not in it for hope; he renounces it as a saving covenant, and under the influence of another and a higher obligation—his marriage to Christ—he brings forth fruit unto God. Was ever liberty so glorious as this—a liberty associated with the most loving, cordial, and holy obedience? Not a single precept of that law, from whose covenant and curse he is released by this act of freedom, is compromised. All its precepts, embodied and reflected in the life of Christ—whose life is the model of our own—appear infinitely more clear and resplendent than ever they appeared before. The obedience of the Lawgiver infinitely enhanced the luster of the law, presenting the most impressive illustration of its majesty and holiness that it could possibly receive.

The *instrument* to whose agency this exalted liberty is ascribed is, the "law of

the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." The term law is forensic; though not infrequently used in God's Word to designate the Gospel of Christ. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law." "The isles shall wait for his law." "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No; but by the law of faith." In this sense we hold that the word is used in the text, *to designate the Gospel* of the blessed God, as the great instrument by which the freedom of which we have spoken is obtained. A few particulars will, we think, justify this view. The Gospel is the law which *reveals the way of salvation by Christ*. It is the development of God's great expedient of saving man. It speaks of pardon and adoption, of acceptance and sanctification, as all flowing to the soul through faith in his dear Son. It represents God as extending his hand of mercy to the vilest sinner; welcoming the penitent wanderer back to his home, and once more taking the contrite rebel to his heart. It is also a *quicken*ing law—emphatically the "law of the Spirit of life." What numbers are seeking sanctification from the "law of sin;" and life from the "law of death!" But the Gospel speaks of life. Its doctrines—its precepts, its promises, its exhortations—its rebukes, its hopes, are all instinct with spiritual life, and come with quickening power to the soul. "The words that I speak unto you," says Jesus, "they are spirit and they are life." "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever." Oh, there is life in the Gospel, because it is "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." It testifies of "Christ, who is our life." It declares that there is no spiritual life but in him. And although "the letter kills," working alone, yet in the hands of the Spirit it gives life. Thus clothed with the energy of the Holy Spirit, the Gospel proves a "savor of life unto life," to all who believe in it to the saving of the soul.

In concluding this chapter, we would remind those who can appropriate to themselves the language of the text, of *the exalted privilege to which they are raised*. A holy, filial, joyful liberty, is your birthright. It is the liberty of a pardoned and justified sinner. It is the liberty of a reconciled, adopted child. It is the liberty of one for whom there is "now no condemnation." And yet how few of God's people walk in the full enjoyment of this liberty? How few pray, and love, and confide, as adopted children! How few labor for life! Oh, sons of God, rise to this your high and heavenly calling! Your freedom was purchased at a high

price, undervalue it not. It is most holy—abuse it not. It binds you, by the strongest obligations, to yield yourselves unto God, as those who are alive from the dead. Be these the breathings of our soul—"Lord! my sweetest

liberty is obedience to you; my highest freedom wearing your yoke; my greatest rest bearing your burden. Oh, how I love your law after the inward man! I delight to do your will, O my God!" The Lord grant unto us that we, "being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life."

### **CHAPTER 3.**

#### **The Impotence of the Law, and God's Method of Meeting It.**

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Romans 8:3.

"For what the law could not do." It is still the moral law of which the apostle speaks. He affirms of that law that it is "weak." The assertion must be received with some qualification. It cannot be denied that the law has power. Divest it of all strength, and of what use would it be? How could it accomplish the design of its enactment? There is a sense, then, and an important one, in which the law has strength. Wherein does its potency lie? The law has power to convict of sin. It mirrors to a man his moral likeness; looking into this law he sees himself to be a sinner. It has power to bring him in guilty before God; to breathe over his head its fearful curse, and to shut him up to its eternal condemnation. With what a tremendous power, then, is this law invested! It wields a mighty arm.

Let the lawless tremble at its strength. Its divinity is not to be denied—its holiness is not to be impugned—its power is not to be trifled with. No man can do violence to this law with impunity. Deem it not a light thing to fall into its iron, merciless grasp. It lays its righteous hand upon you, exclaiming, "Pay me that you *owe*." And if the demand is not met—amply, fully met—it has authority and power to adjudge you to hell forever. Such is the strength of God's holy law.

But, nevertheless, there is a sense, and a vastly important one, in which the law is impotent—utterly powerless. What is it that the law *cannot* do? *The law has no power to place the sinner in a justified state.* In other words, it cannot fulfill its own righteousness. "By him, all who believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses."

"Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." *Nor has it power to give life.* "For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." It pronounces the unjustified sinner dead—his religion dead—his works dead—his faith dead; but with not one breath of spiritual life has it power to inspire the soul. Oh, the infatuation which prompts men to seek spiritual life from a law, powerful only as an instrument of eternal death! Nor has the law power to make anything whatever perfect in the great matter of man's salvation. "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw near unto God." These things the law fails to achieve. And herein is it weak. Holy in its nature, it is yet *incapable of making the sinner holy.* Righteous in its precepts, it yet cannot justify the ungodly. Reflecting the Divine image, it yet has no power to transfer that image to the soul. But let us trace this failure to its proper cause. From where, then, does this weakness of the law of God come from? We reply, *not from any inherent defect in the law.* "The law is holy, just and good," and of itself powerful enough to take the soul to glory. But the Apostle supplies the answer—"weak *through the flesh.*" It was right that he should thus shield the dignity of the law, and maintain that there belonged to it a native force and capacity worthy of Him from whom it emanated, and equal to the accomplishment of the great end for which it was enacted. *The weakness of the law, then, is to be traced, not to any inefficiency of the instrument, but to the sinfulness of man;* not to the agent, but to the subject. What an impressive view does this give us of the deep depravity, the utter sinfulness of our nature! So great is the corruption of the flesh, that it opposes and thwarts the law in its great work of imprinting its image upon the mind of man. Oh, what must be the character and power of that sinfulness which can thus sever the locks of its strength, and divert it from its sacred purpose! Sincerely would it make us holy, but our depravity foils it. Sincerely would it recall our alienated affections, but our heart is so utterly estranged from God, that its generous effort fails. Thus the law is weak, through the corrupt and sinful flesh. Let us be deeply humbled by this truth. How entirely it stains the pride of all our fleshly glory! Where, now, is our native holiness, and our boasted pride, and our vaunted worthiness? The law, always on the side of purity and love, yearned to bring us beneath its holy and benign influence, but our carnality interposed, and it became weak.

"God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." Thus has God graciously provided a remedy which exactly meets the necessity of the case. The law, thwarted and impaired by the depravity of the flesh, having failed to effect the salvation of the sinner, proving itself utterly powerless to justify or

sanctify the soul, *God is represented as devising another, a more stupendous and effective expedient.* This was nothing less than placing the work in the hands of his own Son. The source from where this great and precious gift emanates, supplies a tender rebuke to all those defective views we are prone to entertain of the Father's love to us. What a fullness of meaning in these words—"God sending his own Son,"—sending him from the depths of his love, from the center of his bosom. Truly, "in this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." Herein, indeed, is love! Oh, what cold, suspicious thoughts we have cherished of it! How have we lost sight of it in deep trial, and in the bitter anguish of our spirit! How have we forgotten that he must love us—chastise and rebuke us as he will—who sent his own Son to give us life! Behold the grandeur and the fitness of God's expedient. The Father did seem to say to the beloved One reposing in his bosom—"My Son, our law has failed to accomplish the salvation of a single individual of the human race, through the opposing depravity into which it is sunk. Go on this embassy of love, assume the likeness of the sinner, and in Your mightiness to save, bring my many sons unto glory." Contemplate, too, the *costliness* of the gift. "His *own* Son." Angels are his sons by creation, and saints are his sons by adoption; but Jesus is pre-eminently and emphatically his OWN Son by eternal generation—co-equal, co-essential, and co-eternal with the Father, ineffably begotten from all eternity in the Divine essence. From the abundant proofs of this doctrine, with which the Scriptures of truth are so rich, one or two citations will suffice. Our Lord on every occasion acknowledged his filial relation to God. How often and how touchingly did the expressive words breathe from his sacred lips—"My Father." "I and my Father are one." "All things are delivered unto me by my Father." "In my Father's house are many mansions." Then, as it regards his being by eternal generation the Son of the Highest, hear what the Scriptures of truth affirm. "I know him," says Christ, "for I am from him, and he has sent me." How was Christ from the Father? Certainly not as it related to his mission mainly, but as it respected his eternal generation by the Father. For, observe in these remarkable words the two things are different and distinct; the being from the Father—and the being sent by the Father. Then, as it regards his Sonship, how conclusive are these words—"The Lord said unto me, You are my Son; this day have I begotten you." Beyond all dispute, Christ is the person spoken of here. Three times is this passage quoted in the New Testament, and on each occasion it is invariably applied to the Lord Jesus. The expression "today," has an obvious reference to the eternity of his generation. Eternity is with God but as one day—an eternal now. "Beloved, do not be ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a

thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Thus clear is it that Christ is God's "own Son," having the same essence and nature with himself; and that he is God's "only Son" by natural and eternal generation—"The only begotten Son of God." Further into the depths of this profound truth it would not be our wisdom to descend. There is much awful mystery connected with this fundamental verity of Christian faith, which forbids a too curious and rash investigation. Although it transcends our reason, it does not contravene our reason. It is propounded, like all cognate mysteries of Divine revelation, for our belief. And what human reason is not able to comprehend, divine faith can meekly and unquestioningly receive.

But what words are these—"God sent his own Son!" A person less exalted, less Divine, could not have accomplished what the divine law failed to do. And since an enactment which was a transcript of Deity, proved too feeble for the purpose, Deity itself undertakes the work. God's own eternal and essential Son embarks in the enterprise, and achieves it. What a Rock of salvation, saint of God, is this! Springing from the lowest depths of your humiliation, see how it towers above your curse—your sin—your condemnation! It is a Rock higher than you. Infinitely removed beyond the reach of condemnation is that soul whose faith is planted upon this Rock. How securely can he rest, and how sweetly can he sing, "In the time of trouble he shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me; He shall set me upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me."

"In the likeness of sinful flesh." These words are striking and significant, as placing before us two essential and glorious facts in the history of our Lord—facts interwoven with our holiest experience and most precious hopes. It first places in the clearest possible light the true humanity of the Son of God. It was not human nature *in appearance* that he took, as some have taught—this was the heretical doctrine of the ancient Docetae, but human nature *in reality*. There are other declarations of this truth equally as strong: "God sent forth his Son made of a woman." "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Our blessed Lord has ever been "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence" to the ungodly world. Many are offended with him. His two natures have ever been impugned, opposed, and denied. Some have refused him the glory belonging to his Godhead, while others have attempted to undermine his manhood—thus making him, had it been in the power of his enemies, neither God nor man—a very nothing. But the truth still stands unimpeached and glorious—our Lord assumed real flesh. "My flesh is food indeed." It was, as the Apostle terms it, "the body of his flesh." "Wherefore, when he comes into

the world, he says, Sacrifice and offering you would not, but a body have you prepared me." "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree." It was a perfectly organized body, having all the properties, affinities, and functions belonging to our own. Therefore he is styled "the *man* Christ Jesus." "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." "He was made in the likeness of men." "The seed of the woman." "The seed of Abraham." "The seed of David." Such are the words which inscribe this great truth as with a sunbeam—*our Lord's perfect human body and soul*. The consolation, the sympathy, the strength, which spring from this truth, how great! Bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, made in all points like unto his brethren, O how suitable a Brother is he, born for our every adversity! Now can he, with a feeling of sympathy the most exquisite, be touched with my infirmity; for this nature which I drag about with me, feeble and bruised, jaded and crushed, was the very nature which he took into mysterious union with his Godhead—wore it here below, and wears it still in heaven.

But, secondly, with what care and skill does the Holy Spirit guard the perfect sinlessness of our Lord's humanity! Observe, it was not the reality of sinful flesh that the Son of God assumed, but its 'likeness' only. He took real flesh, but bearing the resemblance only of sinfulness. He was "made like unto his brethren." "Tempted like as we are, yet without sin." And so in the passage before us, "In the likeness of sinful flesh." The words suppose a resemblance to our sinful nature. And, oh! how close that resemblance was!—as like a sinner as one could be, who yet in deed and in truth was not one—"who knew no sin," but was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Man is a sinner; our blessed Lord was man—so truly man, that his enemies exclaimed, "We know this man is a sinner." They could not understand how one could be so really human, and yet be untainted with sin! And then, did there not cling to Jesus *the infirmities of our fallen nature*, which, though sinless in him, were not the less the effects of sin? He hungered—he thirsted—he wept he was wearied—he slept—he was afflicted—he sorrowed—he trembled—he suffered—he died. And as we trace these infirmities of our humanity floating upon the transparent surface of his pure life, how forcible do we feel the words—"Made in the likeness of sinful flesh"! And when we see him traduced as a sinner by man, and—standing beneath his people's transgressions—dealt with as a sinner by God; by man, denounced as "a glutton," "a wine-bibber," "a friend of publicans and sinners," an "impostor," a "deceiver," a "blasphemer" then arraigned, condemned, and executed as a criminal not worthy to live, as an accursed one—by God,

charged with all the sins of the elect church, bruised and put to grief, and at last abandoned by him on the cross, then numbered with transgressors, and making his grave with the wicked in his death—oh! how like sinful flesh was the robe of lowliness and suffering which he wore! And yet, "he was without sin." It was the *resemblance*, not the *reality*. *The human nature of the Son of God was as free from sin as the Deity it enshrined*. He was the "Lamb of God without spot." The least taint of moral guilt—a shade of inherent corruption—would have proved fatal to his mission. One leak in the glorious Ark which contained the Church of God, had sunk it to the lowest depths. Oh! this is the glory of his work, and the solace of our hearts, that Christ our Savior "offered himself without spot unto God." And now we may plead his sinless oblation as the ground of our pardon, and the acceptance of our persons. "He has made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The Lord bless these truths to the comfort and edification of our souls.

"And for sin condemned sin in the flesh;" or, "by a sacrifice for sin." And what was that sacrifice? It was God's own Son—"who gave himself for us." "And when he had by himself purged our sins." "Christ also has loved us, and has given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." By this sacrifice he "condemned sin in the flesh." The word never implies simply to destroy, or remove. Consequently the present and entire destruction of sin in the believer was not the condemnation secured by the sacrifice of Christ. But in two senses we may understand the word. First, he bore the condemnation and punishment of sin, and thus forever secured our pardon. Secondly, and chiefly, he actually so condemned sin in his own material body, that it lost the power of condemning his spiritual body, the Church. So that neither sin, nor the consequence of sin, can ever lay the believer under condemnation. Thus, while sin condemned Jesus as the Surety, Jesus condemned sin as the Judge, assigning it to its own dark and changeless doom. That, therefore, which itself is condemned, cannot condemn. Thus it is that the last song the believer sings, is his sweetest and most triumphant—"O death! where is your sting?" Sin being condemned, pardoned, and forever put away, death, its consequent and penalty, is but a pleasing trance into which the believer falls, to awake up perfected in God's righteousness.

In conclusion, let us, in deep adoration of soul, admire God's illustrious method of meeting the impotence of the law. How suitable to us, how honoring to himself! Relinquishing all thought of salvation by the works of the law, let

us eagerly and gratefully avail ourselves of God's plan of justification. Let our humble and believing hearts cordially embrace his Son. If *the law* is powerless to save, *Christ* is "mighty to save." If the law can but terrify and condemn, it is to drive us into Christ, that we might be justified by faith in him. In him there is a full, finished, and free salvation. We have but to believe, and be saved. We have but to look, and live. We have but to come, and be accepted. Disappointed of our hope in the law, and alarmed by its threatenings pealing in our ears louder than seven thunders, let us flee to Jesus, the "Hiding place from the wind, and the covert from the tempest." There is no condemnation in Christ Jesus. All is peace, all is rest, all is security there. The instant that a poor trembling sinner gets into Christ, he is safe to all eternity. Nor can he be assured of safety one moment outside of Christ. Repair, then, to the Savior. His declaration is—"Him that comes unto me I will in no wise cast out." None are rejected but those who bring a price in their hands. Salvation is by grace; and not to him that works, but to him that believes, the precious boon is given. The turpitude of your guilt, the number of your transgressions, the depth of your unworthiness, the extent of your poverty, the distance that you have wandered from God, are no valid objections, no insurmountable difficulties, to your being saved. Jesus saves sinners "to the uttermost,"—to the uttermost degree of guilt—to the uttermost limit of unworthiness—to the uttermost extent of time. And not only let us look to Christ for salvation, but also for *strength*. Is the law weak? "Christ is the power of God." He is prepared to perfect his strength in our weakness. And the felt conviction of that weakness will be the measure of our strength. Without him we can do nothing; but strong in his might, we can do all things. "In the Lord I have righteousness and strength." And "in him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."

How should this subject deepen our love! "God is love," and the expression of that love is the sending his own Son into the world, to achieve what the law, in its weakness, could not do. Was ever love like this? "God so loved." And was Jesus willing to engage in the embassy? Did he voluntarily clothe Himself in our rags, stoop to our poverty, consent to be arrested and thrown into prison for us? Was he made a curse that he might deliver us from the curse? Did judgment pass upon him that we might be saved from the wrath to come? O here is infinite, boundless love! Then let him have in return our love. It is the least that he can ask, or we can make. Let it be a hearty, cordial, obedient, increasing love. Alas! it is but a drop, when it should be an ocean. It is but a faint spark, when it should be a vehement flame. O how should our best affection flow out toward him who assumed, and still wears, our nature! What

**an attractive, winning object is the Incarnate God, the God-man Mediator! Fairer than the children of men, the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely One, he is the wonder and admiration, the love and song, of all heaven. O why should he not be equally so of all earth? Did the Son of God take up our rude and suffering nature, and shall we be sluggish to take up his lowly and despised cross, and follow hard after him? Forbid it, Lord! Forbid it, precious Savior! What humiliation, what abasement, can be too much for us, the sinful sons of men, when you, the sinless Son of God, did so abase and humble yourself! O let your love constrain us to stand firm to you, to your truth, and to your cause, when the world despises, and friends forsake, and relatives look cold, and all seem to leave and forsake us. And as you did condescend to be made in the likeness of our human and sinful nature, O conform us to the likeness of your Divine and holy nature. As you were a partaker with us, make us partakers with you. As you were made like unto us, in what was proper to man, make us like you, in what is proper to God. And as you did come down to our sinful and dim earth, lift us to your pure and bright heaven!**

#### **Chapter 4.**

#### **The Righteousness of the Law Accomplished in the Believer.**

**"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:4**

**From a representation of the impotence of the law, the Apostle passes to a vindication of its holiness. As if his statement affecting its inadequacy to accomplish that in failure of which God sent his Son into the world, might derogate from its dignity, and impair its rights, he hastens to delineate its true character, and to assert the actual fulfillment of its claims. We purpose, in the elucidation of this passage, to contemplate the exalted character of the law; and then show in what sense its righteousness is fulfilled in the believer.**

**"The righteousness of the law." It falls not within our province, at the present moment, to establish the necessity, or to prove the existence of a Divine law, for the moral government of God's intelligent creatures. In point of fact, the doctrine requires no argument. The proposition is self-evident. There is no part of God's creation, intelligent or irrational, left to self-government; or, in other words, that is without law. In the outer world it is manifest; in the**

domestic constitution still more so; and in God's providential and moral government the evidence is demonstrative. "His kingdom rules over all." It is, however, with the character, not the existence, of the Divine law which God has framed for the well-being and happiness of his moral creatures, that we have strictly now to do.

Emanating from a Being infinitely perfect in every moral perfection, it follows as a natural sequence from this truth, that the law, designed to be a transcript of what God is—a copy of himself—must be in every respect a most perfect law. "The law of the Lord is perfect." How could it be otherwise? Is it rational to suppose that a Being of infinite holiness, wisdom, and goodness, would form a rule for the government of moral creatures that would fail to place before their eye the loftiest standard of excellence, and that should not demand and secure their supreme obedience and happiness? It follows, then, that the law being essentially and perfectly holy, all its requirements must be equally so. It cannot change, nor compromise, nor soften down either the nature, or the outline, or the enforcement of a single enactment. It demands of every creature the profoundest homage, the most implicit obedience, and the most perfect love. In requiring this, the creature shall have no ground for impeaching the Divine goodness. He shall have no reason for alleging of God that he is harsh and austere. As if fearful of perplexing the mind with a multitude of enactments, our Lord has presented one precept of the law, the perfect keeping of which resolves itself into a virtual fulfillment of all. "Jesus said unto him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment."

Who but an infinitely wise Lawgiver could have embodied all the requisitions of an extended code in a single one? What an unfolding of the wisdom of God is here! In securing to himself the supreme love of his creatures, he wins a willing obedience to every precept of his law. Such is the all-commanding, all-constraining power of love to God! Employing no other than this gentle and persuasive motive, God asks your intellect, your time, your service, your rank, your substance, your person, your life, your all. And, in demanding this complete surrender, his law stands forth, in view of all created intelligences, as a rule worthy of him from whom it emanates. O yes! it is a most righteous law.

But in what sense is the righteousness of the law accomplished in the believer? This, it will be perceived, is the declaration of the passage, "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us."

Now it is obvious that the law required obedience, and that that obedience is properly termed the "righteousness of the law." How is this accomplished in us? Most clearly, not in the sense in which it supposes it fulfilled in our own persons. Where, then, would be the weakness of the law? The law has never yet received a complete fulfillment in any fallen creature. Take the most perfect specimen of human obedience, and test it by the high precept we have named. If, for instance, in your love to God there is detected any truaney of affection; if every passion of your soul, if every pulse of your heart, beat not with warm, unwavering and supreme love to God, then your love is imperfect, and your obedience necessarily so. But where is the creature who can assert his plea of perfect love to God? Who can say, "I have loved the Lord my God with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my mind?" What a solemn truth is this, that the best obedience of the best of creatures falls as infinitely below the requirements of the law, as the obedience of the incarnate God rose above it! How, then, are we to understand the holiness of the law as fulfilled in us? Undoubtedly, in that sense only in which it was fulfilled in our Surety. The Lord Jesus fulfilled the righteousness of the law in the behalf of his people. He only could do so who was himself "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." The first step in this wondrous achievement was his being made under the law. What a stoop of Jehovah was this! The Lawgiver placing himself under the government of his own enactment! Let astonishment, love, and praise fill our souls, while, with more than seraphs' ardor, we look into this truth. Having made himself amenable to the law, he then proceeds to its fulfillment. He enters into no negotiation, he proposes no conditions—he asks no compromise—he demurs not at its stern, unbending demand; but receiving it from God just as it was—all broken, weak, and dishonored he yields it back to his Father, "magnified and made honorable." Trace the outline of his obedience. Is the grand moving spring of the law, love? Where was ever seen such costly love to God as our Surety displayed? Was he not a voluntary, a self-immolated sacrifice upon the altar of Divine justice, all for the love he bore his Father's honor? Did he not offer to God a perfectly pure and undivided heart? And did not that affection constrain him to a supreme consecration to his Father's glory? In addition to supreme love, was there not the most perfect sanctity of life? Did not Satan strive to ensnare him by his subtlety, and did not man seek to catch him in his words? And yet no sin was found in him. Trace all the subsequent stages of his course, until that course closed in suffering and blood, accompany him to the baptismal waters, and hear him exclaim, as he meekly yielded himself into the hands of the Baptist, "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness." Then

follow him to Calvary, and behold the last, the finishing act of his unparalleled obedience, his obedience unto death! Was there ever such a law-fulfiller as the Son of God? Such was our Lord's fulfillment of the righteousness of the law, in behalf of his people.

But the question still returns—In what way are we to reconcile the honoring of the law by Christ, and the fulfillment of its righteousness in us?

The difficulty is solved by a reference to the federal union of Christ and his Church—a subject already adverted to in the preceding pages. Standing to his people in the relation of a Covenant Head, the law being fulfilled by him in a legal sense, it was virtually a fulfillment of the law by us, his obedience being accepted in lieu of ours. Thus it is written—"He has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Thus the doctrine of substitution at once harmonizes the apparent discrepancy. *The law thus met in all its claims, fulfilled in its utmost precept, gloriously illustrated, and divinely honored, there can possibly be no condemnation to those in whose behalf the Surety acted.* Thus every humble sinner who, feeling the plague of his own heart, breaking away from his dependence upon a covenant of works, and repairing in simple faith beneath the righteousness of the Incarnate God, shall never come into condemnation. In his case *the precept has been obeyed, and the punishment endured, and the debt discharged,* and not one drop of the dark, lowering storm shall light upon his head. Jesus has delivered him from the wrath to come. And thus by the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in him.

"Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The rightful claimants of this privileged state are thus described. In a delineation which we have already given of this character, we remarked, that those who walked not after the flesh were those who regulated not their life by the dictates of the flesh. It supposes not his exemption from *the assaults and the woundings* of the flesh. So far from this, a Christian is a more prominent mark for its assailings than any other man. He may be ensnared and stumble, but he *walks* not after the flesh. "A just man falls seven times, and rises up again." An unrighteous man, when he falls through the temptations of the flesh, knows nothing of holy contrition for his sin, nor the sprinkling of the atoning blood upon the conscience. He falls, but where he falls he lies. "He that is unrighteous is unrighteous still." He "walks after the flesh." But those in whom the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in their Surety, and in whom a Gospel

righteousness, an evangelical obedience, is performed by themselves, "walk after the Spirit."

Behold, what an open door does this subject set before the humble, convinced sinner. It encircles the whole future of his being with the covenant bow of hope. Beneath its gorgeous and expanding arch he is safe. The law, now honored as it never was—invested with a luster before which its former glory pales, and at the brightness of which angels veil their faces—the utmost honor brought to the Divine government, do you think, penitent reader, that the Lord will reject the application of a single sinner who humbly asks to be saved? What! after the Son of God had stooped so low to save the lowest, had suffered so much to save the vilest, will the Father refuse to enfold to his reconciled heart the penitent who flees to its blessed asylum? Never!

Approach, then, bowed and broken, weary and burdened spirit. There is hope for you in Jesus, there is forgiveness for you in Jesus, there is acceptance for you in Jesus, there is rest for you in Jesus, there is a heaven of bliss and glory awaiting you—all in Jesus, the law's great fulfiller. O, how welcome will the heart of Christ make you. How full and free will be the pardon of God extended to you. How deep and rich the peace, and joy, and hope, which, like a river, will roll its gladdening waves into your soul the moment that you receive Christ into your heart! "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

Saints of God, keep the eye of your faith intently and immovably fixed upon Christ, your sole pattern. Our Lord did not keep that law that his people might be lawless. He did not honor that law that they might dishonor its precepts. His obedience provided no license for our disobedience. His fulfillment releases us not from the obligation—the sweet and pleasant, yet solemn obligation—to holiness of life. Our faith does not make void the law, but rather establishes the law. The "righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us" when we "walk after the Spirit," in lowly conformity to Christ's example. Was he meek and lowly in heart? Did he bless when cursed? Did he, when reviled, revile not again? Did he walk in secret with God? Did he always seek to do those things which pleased his Father? Did he live a life of faith, and prayer, and toil? So let us imitate him, that of us it may be said, "These are they who follow the Lamb wherever he goes."

What richer comfort can flow into the hearts of the godly than that which springs from this truth? "The righteousness of the law fulfilled in us!" What

wondrous, blessed words! You are often in fear that the righteousness of the law will rise against you; and when you consider your many failures and shortcomings, you justly tremble. But fear not! for *in Christ the law is perfectly fulfilled, and fulfilled in your stead, as much as if you had obeyed it in your own person*. Is not this a sure ground of comfort? You see the imperfection of your own obedience, and you are alarmed; but have you not an eye also for the perfection of Christ's obedience, which he has made yours by imputation? "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus," because he has fulfilled the law's righteousness in their behalf. You are cast down because of the law of sin—but the Spirit of life has freed you from the law. You are troubled because of the law of God—but that law, by Christ's perfect obedience, is fulfilled in you. You desire a righteousness that will present you without spot before God, you have it in him who is the "Lord our Righteousness." Christian! Christ's whole obedience is yours. What can sin, or Satan, or conscience, or the law itself allege against you now? Be humble, and mourn over the many flaws and failures in your obedience; yet withal rejoice, and glory, and make your boast in the fullness, perfection, and unchangeableness of that righteousness of the Incarnate God which will place you without fault before the throne. Sinner! if the righteousness of the law is not fulfilled in you now, that righteousness will be exhibited in your just condemnation to all eternity! Flee to Christ Jesus, the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes.

## **CHAPTER 5.**

### **"The Unregenerate and the Regenerate Contrasted"**

**"For those who are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but those who are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." Romans 8:5.**

**"Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires." Romans 8:5**

Two different classes are here presented to our view, in striking and solemn contrast. With regard to the first, a more accurate, and at the same time a more awful, portrait of the carnal state of man exists not in any language than

this. He is described as *living after the flesh*. And lest it should be supposed, as by some it is, that a corrupt tree can bring forth good fruit, or, in other words, that holiness is the natural product of our unrenewed nature, it is added, who "mind the things of the flesh." But before we go more fully into the unfolding of this subject, we should remark, that the term "flesh" has various significations in God's word, often decidedly opposite to that which it bears in the passage before us. For example, it is sometimes used to denote *a softened disposition of mind*: "I will give you a heart of flesh." Again, it sets forth the tender and close union subsisting between Christ and his Church: "No man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the Church." A yet deeper and more sublime signification it assumes when used to describe the mysterious incarnation of the Son of God: "The Word was made flesh." But the sense in which the word is employed in the text under consideration, is totally different to any we have quoted. It designates *the fallen and carnal state of the unrenewed man*. He is after the flesh, and his whole life is in accordance with the dictates of the flesh. Our Lord thus describes it—"That which is born of the flesh is flesh." That is, it is nothing more than carnal and corrupt. It is originally corrupt, and corrupt it remains until it perishes. "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." We are thus taken to the very root of all the depravity and crime which afflicts and degrades our common nature. It is not so much the outbreak of sin—the wretchedness and woe which, working upwards, floats upon the surface of society; that presents to a spiritual eye the most afflicting view of man's fallen condition, as the fact, that the root of all iniquity dwells in his nature; and that, when he hates God, and opposes his government, and violates his laws, and injures his fellow-creatures, it is not an accident of his nature, nor the effect of a surprisal into sin, like that of our first parents, as it is the working out of an original and natural principle; it is the development of an innate and deep corruption, coursing its way upward, as we have said, from the concealed depths of his nature to the surface of his life. And thus, though the ethics of a man be sound, and his life be in harmony with the morality of his creed, yet in the absence of the Spirit's regeneration, he is still emphatically "after the flesh:" he bears about with him an original principle of evil, whose existence links him to the flesh, the full development of which is only suppressed by the laws of society, a consciousness of right and wrong, a natural regard for his own well-being, and the overruling power of God.

But we shall, perhaps, form a more accurate idea of this affecting state, in the further consideration of its workings, upon the same principle by which we

judge the species of a plant by its flower, or of a tree by its fruit. It is said, that "they who are of the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh." The idea is, that all the objects of attraction, the desires and pursuits of the carnal mind, are corrupt and worldly. The phrase, "do mind the things of the flesh," may express two ideas. First, and primarily, the exercise of the intellect; second, and by implication, the exercise of the affections. "Set your affection upon things above:" literally, set your mind. But what an awful charge thus alleged against unrenewed men! Nor is this charge unsustained by adequate proof. It is impossible, in the nature of things, that a corrupt mind could give its consideration to things opposed to itself. No nature can transcend its own powers. Each act must be in harmony with the character of the principle from where it emanates. A beast cannot act as a man, without participating in the human. A human being cannot act with the power of an angel, without partaking the nature of the angelic. How, then, can that which is after the flesh, act as that which is after the Spirit? In other words, how can a carnal mind put forth the actions of a holy mind, unless it first become holy? How can a man believe without possessing the principle of faith? or love, without the principle of love? "Israel is an empty vine, he brings forth fruit unto himself." (Hebrew, "equal to himself") that is, a fruit partaking of his own nature. Our Lord embodies the same idea in his peculiarly graphic language: "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." And then follows the solemn result: "Every tree that brings not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire." We have thus most distinctly placed before us this solemn truth—that *a fleshly or corrupt mind must act agreeably with its own nature; and so acting, must be supremely engrossed with the things of the flesh.* This, too, must be the character of its religion. All its conceptions and ideas must be in harmony with its unrenewed nature. "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The product of a fallen nature, the natural and spontaneous growth of a corrupt soil, the fruit must correspond with the character of the seed sown. The religious perceptions of such a mind must be crude and obscure, for they are the perceptions of a darkened understanding. The proffered homage of such a heart must be vain and dissembled, since it is the homage of a heart alienated from God. Such, too, must be the worship offered to that Being who is a Spirit, and who requires of those who worship him, that they worship him in spirit and in truth. Its ritual may be sound, its rites may be scriptural, its forms may be solemn, its offerings may be costly, it is still the sacrifice of the dead offered to a living God! It is the worship of those who are "walking according to the flesh." And with all the apparent

thirstings of a carnal mind after a knowledge of God—and in some cases we know how deep that thirst may be—there is a starting off from, no more, there is *a deadly opposition to*, God the moment he approaches wearing the character revealed in his Word. Just as Adam, who ate the fruit in the vain conceit of increasing his knowledge, yet when God, the Object and the Fountain of knowledge, drew near in the pleasant Eden, at evening's cool, calm twilight, he fled the Divine presence, and hid himself amid it's bowers. Such only "know Christ after the flesh." They know him intellectually, historically, speculatively, notionally, and this is the extent of their knowledge of God. They may designate him "our Savior," and profess no other way to heaven but by him; and yet, sad to affirm, all their conceptions of his glory, and all their views of his works, and all their protestations of attachment to his person, are those of one who, living in the flesh, "knows Christ only after the flesh."

"Do mind the things of the flesh." What expressive words! All their pursuits are fleshly. Those pursuits may be, in the world's view, noble, daring, refined—they may have a tendency to develop great mental powers, to call into exercise mighty energies, to elevate the taste, to soften and refine the feelings, and even, to a certain extent, advance the present well-being of society—yet is it but a "minding of the things of the flesh." Contemplate the enjoyments and pursuits of the carnal mind in what light you may—the most intellectual and elevated—they yet spring from the flesh, are bounded by the flesh, and with the flesh they perish. This is your character, if not born again of the Spirit. It is not necessary that you mind *all* the things of the flesh in order to constitute you a carnal man. It is enough to fasten this character upon you, that you have given yourself over to the indulgence or the pursuit even so far as one of these things. A sinner may not be a debauchee, and neither the one nor the other may be an aspiring politician. But whatever the reigning passion may be, if it has the effect of attaching you to some one object that is in the world, and which with the world will terminate and perish—then still your mind is in subjection to an idol, and the death of the carnally minded is your inheritance and your doom. Do not be deceived then, you men, who, engrossed with the cares, and observant of all the sobrieties of business, are not addicted to the influences of dissipation; nor you, who, heedless of wealth's accumulations, can mix an occasional generosity with the squanderings of intemperance and riot; nor you, who, alike exempted from sordid avarice or debasing sensuality, have yet, in pursuit of an ascendancy over the mind and the measures of your fellow men, made 'power' the reigning felicity of your existence; nor yet even you, who, without any settled

aim after one or the other of these gratifications, fluctuate in giddy unconcern from one of the world's frivolities to another. None of you mind all the things of the flesh; yet each of you mind one or the other of these things, and that to the entire practical exclusion of the things of the Spirit from the preference of your habitual regards. We do not charge you with a devotion of heart to all these things in the world which are opposite to the love of the Father, any more than we charge you with idolatrously falling in obeisance to all the deities of a heathen polytheism. But still, if only one of these divinities be your God, this would be enough to constitute you an idolater, and to convict you of a sacrilegious disavowal of the King who is eternal and immutable. And so, your one earthly appetite, though free from the tyranny of all the others; your habit of ungodliness—though it be the only one that breaks out into visible expression in the history of your life—of itself renders you a carnal man; of itself drives you from the spiritual territory; of itself proves that you are still one of the children of this world; and that you have not passed from death unto life.

"But those who are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." They who are after the Spirit undoubtedly are those who are the subjects of the Spirit's renewing grace. "That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." Under his teaching and oh, who teaches like him?—they have renounced their own works of righteousness as dead works; feeling, to use the figurative language of the prophet, "the bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself in it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." They have broken their covenant with death, and have disannulled their agreement with hell, and fleeing out of all their "refuges of lies," they have betaken themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, and have experienced him to be their "It wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

What a marvellous revolution is this, effecting a total moral change in the whole spiritual and intellectual man, yet without impairing a single mental faculty or power! The mind not unbalanced, is rather strengthened and regulated by the change. The affections, not alienated and contracted, are expanded and fixed upon their lawful object. The will has not lost a particle of its liberty, but is more free than ever, since, drawn by the Spirit, it now blends harmoniously with the Divine will. The whole man is identically the same individual—yet how transformed! The prodigal alien has become a penitent child; the slave, a freeman; the man dwelling among the tombs now sits at the Savior's feet, clothed, and in his right mind. Who but the Eternal Spirit could effect this wondrous revolution?

**But more than this. Having dethroned the enemy, the Spirit now enthrones himself. Having swept and garnished the abode, he enters, and makes it his unchangeable dwelling. Thus living and reigning in the soul, believers are brought under the government of the Spirit. It may emphatically be said of them, that they "mind the things of the Spirit." The new and Divine nature within is exercised upon things congenial with itself. Confronted by the powerful phalanx of the flesh, with which he holds a severe and ceaseless warfare, the Christian is yet at times enabled to concentrate his attention upon the things of the Spirit. He walks with God in his temporal calling; he holds communion with heaven while yet the present life fetters him to earth; he has spiritual desires, and holy breathings, and successful contests, in the hottest battle with the law of his members. The one bent of his inclinations, the single aim of his mind, is to the "things of the Spirit." His nature being spiritual, so are his religious enjoyments. Does he sing?—it is with "spiritual songs." Does he pray?—he "prays in the Spirit." Does he call Jesus Lord?—it is "by the Spirit." Is he Christ's?—he "has the Spirit of Christ." Thus believers walk in the Spirit; they follow the dictates of the Spirit; they yield themselves to the teaching of the Spirit; and they bring forth in their due season "the fruits of the Spirit."**

**By this truth let us test the reality of our religious profession. In this light let us closely examine our Christian character and walk. *What, reader, is the habitual and supreme bent of your mind?* Is it that which is spiritual, or that which is carnal? Judge of your preparation for death, in the near view of its approaching solemnities. Decide upon your state for eternity, in the rapid progress of its deepening shadows. Ascertain the real state of your case for the judgment, in the certain arrival of its dread scrutiny. You have your mind either set upon the things of the flesh, or upon the things of the Spirit. You are either born again from above, or are groveling in things below. You are either sanctified, or you are unholy. You are for the Lord, or you are against him. You are either Satan's slave, or Christ's freeman. Which? You inquire, "How may I know that I am of the Spirit?" We answer, by your producing the fruits of the Spirit. A broken heart for sin—a felt conviction of the hidden plague—a humble and a contrite spirit—an utter rejection of a human righteousness—a simple, believing reception of the Lord Jesus—and a breathing after Divine conformity, are evidences of a renewed and sanctified state. If these are yours in any degree, then you are of the Spirit.**

**But rest not here. Be exhorted to walk in the Spirit. Do not be satisfied with**

having the question decided in your favor—with just barely knowing that you have crossed the line that separates the regenerate from the unregenerate—death from life. Remain not where you are: go forward. Do not be content with a low standard. Compare not your Church with other Churches, nor yourself with other Christians; nor measure yourself by yourself. But fix your eye upon Christ; copy his example, imbibe his mind, and place yourself under the government of his Spirit. Strive to go forward! Endeavor to be always sowing to the Spirit. Be satisfied with the Lord's disposal of you. Study the divine art of contentment. Be convinced that what the Lord ordains is best. Covet but little of earthly good; and, as an old divine exhorts, "sail with a low gale." Lie low. The great secret of a holy and of a happy life is contained in a small compass—walking humbly with God. In all failures in duty, in all shortcomings in practice, in all transactions with God, and in all dealings with man—remembering the innumerable traces of imperfection and sin found upon all you do—deal frequently, closely, with the atoning blood. "Wash and be clean."

## **CHAPTER 6.**

### **"Spiritual-mindedness"**

"For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."—Romans 8:6.

"The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;" Romans 8:6

It will not be disputed that the true test of excellence is its nearest approach to perfection. To nothing will this rule more strictly apply than to the Christian character. Essentially considered, there can be no difference between one believer and another. Both are equally the objects of God's love, and alike the subjects of his regenerating grace. Both stand on an equal footing of acceptance, and participate the same in the immunities which belong to the children of God. But it cannot be denied, nor must it be concealed, that there is a great and marked difference in the moral influence which one Christian exerts beyond another. In the measure of his grace—in the depth of his Christianity—in the vigor of his faith—in the luster of his holiness—in the glory he brings to God, and in the consequent happiness of which he is conscious. It may be truly said of the Church on earth, as of the Church in

heaven, "one star differs from another." And to what is this variation to be traced? Undoubtedly to a difference in the tone of spiritual-mindedness. The one is the man of a low, the other of a high Christian standard. Drawing their life, light, and support from one center, they yet seem to move in widely distant orbits. The one seems nearer to the Sun than the other. And thus, standing in a closer proximity to the Fountain of all grace, he draws from its fullness the more largely, and dispenses the more freely. His humble walk with God, his close adherence to Christ, his following the Lord fully, imparts a charm to his piety, a brilliance to his example, and a potency to his influence, which place him in the highest rank of Christian men.

In the passage before us two characters are presented to our view: the carnal mind, with its awful consequence; the spiritual mind, with its holy and heavenly fruit. "To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

"To be carnally minded is death." If there is one consideration which more than another gives us a vivid and impressive view of man's deep apostasy from original holiness, it is the fact, that not only the lower sentiments and feelings of his nature are utterly and awfully debased, but that the higher and nobler parts of his being—the rational, the intellectual, the moral—have felt the vibrations of the shock, and share alike in the common ruin. In the strong language of the apostle, he is "carnally-minded." Now, to be carnally minded, in the sense of the passage, implies a condition in which the whole soul is entirely engrossed with things correspondent to its fallen nature. This desperate state is not resolvable simply into a flaw of the understanding, or an occasional starting off of the heart from God, but into a deep and thorough carnalization of that which distinguishes him from the brute creation, and which links him in the closest resemblance to God—the MIND. The carnal mind thus describing and governing the whole man—all his thoughts and feelings, pursuits and pleasures, like the stream from the fountain, correspond with its nature. "Many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping (Paul had his tears of sympathy for poor unconverted sinners: how many have we?) that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who *mind earthly things*." This is the broad seal affixed to every unregenerate individual—"who mind earthly things." Select the most intellectual, ennobling, and useful objects that ever gave development to genius, and birth to thought, or awoke the energies and enterprise of men, and, compared with his eternal interests, what contemptible puerilities do they appear! Survey the

whole life of an unconverted man: how unworthy his rational being, and his deathless existence, is that life! "Are these men?" we are tempted to ask.

"See what low-browed bearing—what groveling pursuits, what contemptible enjoyments! The honors he wears, what baubles! The things he pursues, what shadows! The pleasures he indulges, what bubbles!" Again we ask, Are these men? Are they rational? are they sane? are they soon to die? are they on their way to eternity? do they really believe in a God—in a hereafter—in a judgment—in a hell?

And what is *the awful consequence of this condition*? It issues in death, present and eternal death. "To be carnally minded is death." The nature of the death here spoken of is defined by the tense. It is a *present* death. To be carnally minded is death—it is death now. To the life of God—the high spiritual life which every believer lives—the unregenerate are dead. Bring them to the test. Address them upon things congenial with their nature, they are all life and animation. Bring before them some subject with which their habitudes of thought are familiar, or with which their taste assimilates—let it be, for example, the progress of literature, or the discoveries of science, or the state of the funds, or the bearings of politics, a painting, an oratorio, or a book, and you have touched the spring which moves all the sympathies and powers the soul. Converse with the scholar of his Homer, with the philosopher of his Newton, with the poet of his muse, with the astronomer of his stars, with the banker of his bullion, with the merchant of his market, with the farmer of his cattle, with the sensualist of his pleasures, with the husband of his bride, with the mother of her first-born, and you have awakened the devotion and enthusiasm of the heart in favor of its fond and worshiped idol. To all this the carnal mind is alive. But alas! the end of these things is death. Change your theme. Meet him in the busy hum of business, or lonely plying his daily task, or amid the heat and excitement of his speculations and his pleasures, and speak to him of Jesus; breathe that name which fills the church below with its fragrance, and the church above with its music, and there is no echo; no responsive chord vibrates to your touch; it is as though you had told your story to a senseless automaton, or had chanted your music to the ear of a corpse. Death is there.

But this is not all. All? O no! it is but the preface, the prelude to that which is to come. Men are compelled in their calculations to look forward to death—but the remote *consequences of death* they ponder not. "After death the *judgment*." But this judgment they take not into their calculations. A simple

fact may afford an impressive illustration of this phase of the unregenerate mind. A young man, whom he had known as a boy, came to an aged Professor of a distinguished continental University, with a face beaming with delight, and informed him that the long and fondly-cherished desire of his heart was at length fulfilled—his parents having given their consent to his studying the profession of the law. As the University presided over by his friend was a distinguished one, he had repaired to its law school, and was resolved to spare no labor or expense in getting through his studies as quickly and ably as possible. In this strain he continued for some time; and when he paused, the old man, who had been listening to him with great patience and kindness, gently said, "Well! and when you have finished your career of study, what do you mean to do then?" "Then I shall take my degree," answered the young man. "And then?" asked his venerable friend. "And then," continued the youth, "I shall have a number of difficult and knotty cases to manage: shall attract notice by my eloquence, and wit, and acuteness, and win a great reputation." "And then?" repeated the holy man. "And then!" replied the youth, "why then there cannot be a question—I shall be promoted to some high office in the state, and I shall become rich." "And then?" "And then," pursued the young lawyer, "then I shall live comfortably and honorably in wealth and respect, and look forward to a quiet and happy old age." "And then?" repeated the old man. "And then," said the youth, "and then—and then—and then I shall die." Here his venerable listener lifted up his voice, and again asked, with solemnity and emphasis—"And then?" Whereupon the aspiring student made no answer, but cast down his head, and in silence and thoughtfulness retired. This last "And then?" had pierced his heart like a sword—had darted like a flash of lightning into his soul, and he could not dislodge the impression. The result was, the entire change of his mind and course of his life. Abandoning the study of the law, he entered upon that of divinity, and expended the remainder of his days in the labors of a minister of Christ. O, it is the 'after consequences' that make death so terrible to the worldling. There exists a strong analogy between the present and future death of the unregenerate. The spiritual death of the sinner holds its gloomy reign in the empire of a soul, all whose intellectual and moral faculties and powers are instinct with life, are girt with strength, and glow with animation. There is a vivid impression made by external objects. There is a keen sense of animal enjoyment. There is a high relish of the sublime delights and lofty exhilarations of a virtuous heart and a cultivated mind. And still it is the empire of death. "Death reigns." Pass in imagination to the "second death," so vividly portrayed amid the splendors of the apocalypse. Neither is that terrible death an entire cessation of consciousness, of feeling, of sensibility.

Far from it. Not a faculty of the lost mind is impaired; not a power of the soul is destroyed; not a feeling of the heart is blunted. No, all have acquired a *development*, and a *strength*, they never experienced before. Memory will summon back each past event with all the vividness of a present transaction. And passion will struggle intensely with its unsatisfied desire. And a burning sense of shame, of loss, and of suffering, will bear down the spirit to the fathomless depths of misery. Think not, O unregenerate man, that the "second death" is an unconscious slumber, or a mesmeric trance. O no! it is a living, an eternal death. There will be nothing to alleviate but the scathing, overwhelming conviction of the perfect equity of the sentence, the strict righteousness of the doom. God will say—"I created you for my glory. I placed you in that world to live for my praise. Where are the *talents* with which I created you—the *gifts* with which I endowed you—the *rank* with which I distinguished you—the *substance* with which I entrusted you—the *influence* with which I clothed you—the *years* which I lengthened out to you? You wicked and slothful servant! you have buried my gifts in the earth, and have lived to yourself—depart from me!" In view of a doom so tremendous and just, with what force and solemnity do the words fall upon the ear—"To be carnally minded is death!"

We now turn to a more pleasing theme. "But to be spiritually minded is life and peace." There will be no difficulty in determining the origin, and in detecting the evidences of this state. It springs from the life of God in the soul. Apart from this, there cannot possibly be any real spiritual—mindedness. True spirituality is the springing up of the living water of Christ in the renewed heart. It is the "bringing forth of fruit upward"—of a root of grace in the soul of the regenerate. There is much that bears the semblance of holiness, and which, with many, passes current as such, but which we are compelled to pronounce spurious and counterfeit. Such, for example, to a vast extent, is the apparent sanctity of the Romish Church. Far be it from us to decide thus positively upon every such case found in the most corrupt anti-Christian communion on earth. This would be to claim a power, and exercise a prerogative, which belong essentially and absolutely to God alone. That within the pale of the apostate church there have lived and died true and sincere men of God, cannot be denied. Such was the heavenly-minded Blaise Pascal, and his Port Royalist companions. Such, too, was Martin Boos, and others of equal piety in the same communion. Does not the solemn call recognize this fact, "Come out of her, my people, that you do not be partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues?" And are we not told, that when the elect are made up, and shall "stand before the throne and before the

Lamb," they shall be "a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues;" and that this shall be the anthem of all, "You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation?" Thus from all communions, and from each fold, God will call out his hidden ones, who, amid much darkness, and error, and superstition, have groped their way to the cross; and who, sensible of the serpent's sting, have in simple faith looked alone for salvation to the crucified Savior; and in whose souls, beneath the mantle of superstition and error, there dwelt the dim but inextinguishable spark of a divine and heavenly light. Oh! how unspeakably great the mercy that, in a matter so momentous as our salvation, we deal with a God who searches the heart! Oh! cheering truth, that the Shepherd knows his sheep, in whatever fold they are found; and that the sheep know the Shepherd, however dim their perception of his grace and glory. "The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, The Lord knows those who are his."

But we repeat the truth, that all real spiritual-mindedness is the offspring of a new and spiritual life in the soul. The state of which we speak is the effect of a cause, the consequent upon a certain condition of mind. Before a man can exercise any degree of true heavenliness, he must be heavenly. Before he can bring forth the fruits of holiness, he must be holy.

Dear reader, is this your condition? Have you the life of God in your soul? Have you passed from death unto life? Is the fruit you bear the result of your engrafting into Christ? You attend upon the service of the sanctuary; you visit the abodes of the wretched: you administer to the necessities of the poor; you are rigid in your duties, and zealous in your charities; but does it all spring from faith in Christ, and from love to God? Is it from life, or for life? Oh! remember, that the spiritual-mindedness which the Bible recognizes, of which God approves, has its root in the life of God in the soul!

But in what does spiritual-mindedness consist? It is the setting of the mind upon spiritual objects. The heart is fixed on God. The bent of the soul—its desires and breathings, are towards him. It is a firm, growing approximation of all the renewed faculties to spiritual and heavenly realities. God in Christ is the attraction of the heart. That the needle of the soul *always* thus steadily points to him we do not affirm; there are false attractions which lure the affections from God, and deaden the spirituality of the mind. To be carnally minded brings a kind of death even into the renewed soul; but this is not the reigning, predominant state. Let God remove that false attraction—let the

**Eternal Spirit apply with his own quickening power some precious truth to the heart, and the wayward, tremulous needle returns to its center; and the heart is again fixed on God, its exceeding joy. Oh, how holy and precious are these restorings!**

**Love to God is the governing motive of the spiritual mind. All desire of human admiration and applause pales before this high and holy principle of the soul. Its religion, its devotion, its zeal, its toils, its sacrifices, spring from love. Love prompts, love strengthens, love sweetens, love sanctifies all. This it is that expels from the heart the rival and false claimant of its affections, and welcomes and enthrones the true. It may, at times, like the pulse of the natural life, beat languidly, yet, unlike that pulse, it never ceases entirely to beat. The love of God in the soul never expires. Fed from the source from where it emanates, the holy fire, dim and dying as it may appear at times, never goes out. Have you this evidence of the spiritual mind, my reader? Does the love of Christ constrain you? It is the first and the chief grace of the Spirit; do you possess it? "Now abides faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love." It is the main-spring, the motive power, of the spiritual mechanism of the soul—all its wheels revolve, and all its movements are governed by it. Is this the pure motive that actuates you in what you do for God? Or, do there enter into your service and your sacrifice, anything of self-seeking, of thirst for human approbation, of desire to make a fair show in the flesh, of aiming to make religion subserve your temporal interests? Oh, search your hearts, and see; sift your motives, and ascertain! Love to God—pure, unmixed, simple love—is the attribute of the spiritual mind; and, in proportion to the intensity of the power of love, as a motive, will be the elevated tone of your spirituality. Nor need there be any lack of this motive power. "God is love," and he is prepared to supply it to the mind's utmost capacity. We are straitened in ourselves, not in him. The ocean, on whose margin we doubtingly, timidly stand, is infinite, boundless, fathomless. The Lord is willing to direct our hearts into its depths, but we hesitate and draw back, awed by its infinite vastness, or stumbling at its perfect freeness. But to attain to a high standard of heavenly-mindedness, we must have more of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which he has given unto us. We must love Christ more.**

**It enters essentially and deeply into this state of spiritual-mindedness, that the heart be much with Jesus on the throne. "If you then are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affections (mind) on things above, not on things on the earth." To**

win heaven, the mind must become heavenly; and to be heavenly, it must habituate itself to heavenly things and heavenly pursuits. It is a law of our mental constitution, that the mind assimilates in its tone and habits of thought with the subject which most engrosses its study. Hence it is that we sometimes become men of one idea. Now the contemplation of divine and spiritual themes has a powerful tendency to spirituality and sanctify the mind. It seems impossible to breathe a heavenly atmosphere, and not be heavenly; to study holy things, and not be holy; to admire the image of Christ, and not resemble Christ; to have frequent communion with Jesus upon the throne, and not catch some stray beam of his glory. And apart from Christ nothing is really pleasant and satisfying to the heavenly mind. Without him, what a dreary, lonesome wilderness were this! But with Christ in the heart, and the heart resting in Christ—he in the center of our souls, and our affections and desires centering in him—the desert loses its solitude and its desolateness. To have the eye resting on Jesus—all our heart-springs in him—the spirit in frequent excursions where he dwells in light and glory—to lean upon him, and converse with him as though he were actually walking by our side, sitting at our board, associated with us in our callings—this, this is heavenly-mindedness. Such is the counter-attraction to the "things on the earth,"—the secularizing pursuits, the low-thoughted cares, the carnal enjoyments—which we so deeply need. And this powerful, counteracting influence which we possess is a realization of our resurrection with Christ, and his enthronement in glory.

Individual and close communion with Jesus, in the matter of confession of sin, and washing in the atoning blood, strongly marks the state of spiritual-mindedness. No Christian duty forms a surer test of the spiritual tone of the believer than this. The essence, the very life of spiritual-mindedness, is holiness; and the deepening of heart-holiness is the measure of our sanctity of life. Now, there can be no progress in holiness apart from a habit of frequent laying open of the heart in the acknowledgment of sin to Christ. The conscience only retains its tenderness and purity by a constant and immediate confession; and the heart can only maintain its felt peace with God as it is perpetually sprinkled with the blood of Jesus. The soul thus kept beneath the cross preserves its high tone of spirituality unimpaired in the midst of all the baneful influences by which it is surrounded. "To maintain a conscience void of offence, I am persuaded I ought to confess sin more. I think I ought to confess sin the moment I see it to be sin; whether in company, or in study, or even preaching, the soul ought to cast a glance of abhorrence at the sin. If I go on with duty, leaving sin unconfessed, I go on with a burdened conscience, and add sin to sin. I think I ought at certain times of the day, to confess solemnly

the sins of the previous hours, and seek their complete remission. I feel when I have sinned an immediate reluctance to go to Christ. I am ashamed to go. I feel as if it would not do to go; as if it were making Christ the minister of sin, to go straight from the swine-trough to the best robe; and a thousand other excuses; but I am persuaded they are all lies direct from hell. John argues the opposite way—'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father;' and a thousand other Scriptures are against it. I am sure there is neither peace, nor safety from deeper sin, but in going directly to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is God's way of peace and holiness. It is folly to the world and the beclouded heart, but it is the way." Such were the holy sentiments and lofty aspirations of an eminently spiritual mind (McCheyne); and if we follow him as he followed the precepts of Christ, we must transcribe, and make his experience our own. The holy sensitiveness of the soul that shrinks from the touch of sin, the acute susceptibility of the conscience at the slightest shade of guilt, will of necessity draw the spiritual mind frequently to the blood of Jesus. And herein lies the secret of a heavenly walk. Acquaint yourself with it, my reader, as the most precious secret of your life. He who lives in the habit of a prompt and minute acknowledgment of sin, with his eye reposing calmly, believingly, upon the crucified Redeemer, soars in spirit where the eagle's pinion ranges not. He walks in secret places with God. "He shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks." "There is a path which no fowl knows, and which the vulture's eye has not seen"—"it is the new and living way," "the royal highway wherein the saints alone walk with God." "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up therein: it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there." Sprinkled with the blood of the Incarnate God, how holy, how awful the place! Who can walk there, and not be spiritually-minded?

The possession of the Holy Spirit in the fullness of his grace contributes essentially to the constitution of the spiritual mind. The great antagonist of carnality is the Spirit. "If we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." "Do not be drunk with wine, but be *filled* with the Spirit." As the Spirit of God, he is the Author of all that is spiritual. As the Spirit of holiness, he maintains and carries forward the work of sanctification in the soul. He it is who forms, and he it is who leads forward, the spiritual mind. The large possession of the Spirit! nothing can exceed the blessing. Without the Spirit of God, what is man? He is the mark of every fiery assault, the prey of every prowling foe—a magazine of corruption, around which a thousand sparks—sparks of his own kindling—fall. But possessing the Spirit, even in its most limited measure, what is man? A living soul—a holy being—a temple of

God—an heir of glory. But suppose him possessing the Spirit in the plenitude of His grace, not partially, but "*filled* with the Spirit,"—what must be the invincibility of his might in the resistance of sin! what the potency of his shield in disarming the power of temptation! and what the eminence of his attainments in spiritual mindedness, as a child of God! While others are girding for the conflict, or are adjusting their armor, he is covering himself with glory on the battle-field. While others are training for the race, he has well-near reached the goal. Filled with the Spirit, he is filled with all the fruits of the Spirit. Faith is vigorous, hope is bright, love is fervent. He is mighty in the "Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." It was this possession of the Spirit in his fullness which gave to the Apostles, who until then were so timid and unbelieving, such irresistible boldness and power on the day of Pentecost. Some in their hearing exclaimed, "These men are full of new wine." But the secret was, "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit." And the hearts of the great mass to whom they preached the crucified Savior, bowed before the power of their preaching, "as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind." O seek to be filled with the Spirit! then will your thirstings for God be deeper—your breathings after holiness intenser—your communion with your Heavenly Father closer, and your faith in Jesus stronger. The indwelling of the Spirit is the *root* of all holiness; but the communication of the Spirit in the plenitude of His gracious, sanctifying, Christ-transforming influence, is the secret of an elevated tone of heavenly-mindedness. Would you repel some strong assault, or vanquish some powerful corruption, or throw off some clinging infirmity, and wander by the verdant banks and quiet waters of fellowship with the Father and with his Son Christ Jesus? O ask, and you shall receive, the fullness of the Spirit.

"To be spiritually-minded is life and peace." Such are the fruits of a plant so divine and heavenly. Spiritual-mindedness is "life." We fearlessly challenge every believer—What has been the effect in your soul of a low state of grace? What has been the effect of carnal indulgence—of allowed sin—of needless communion with the world—of conformity to its policy and its pleasures—of unruly temper—of a volatile disposition, yes, of any species of carnality whatever; has it not been "death?" When a process of spiritual relapse has been allowed to proceed stealthily and unchecked; when the world, and sin, and self have gained an ascendancy, what has been the consequence?—"death!" The habit of prayer may not have been totally neglected, but there has been no communion with God—and so there has been death upon prayer. The Bible has not been entirely unread, but no light has beamed upon the sacred page—and so there has been death upon the Bible. The means of grace

have not been utterly forsaken, but no grace has distilled from these channels—and so there has been death upon the means of grace. Thus a spiritual deathliness has crept over the soul, the effect and fruit of indulged and growing carnality. But "life" is the blessed effect of heavenly-mindedness. It is life springing from life, or rather the inner life in its outer actings. What spiritual mightiness, almost omnipotent, does he possess whose mind, and heart, and faculties are deeply immersed in the Spirit of Christ—closely allied to the divine and heavenly! As sin is weakness, so holiness is strength. As carnality impairs, so spirituality invigorates. The one deadens, the other vivifies. Close dealing with Essential Life increases the life of spirituality. Much communion with Jesus draws forth "life more abundantly." It is impossible to live a life of faith in the Son of God, constantly taking to his blood every sin, to his heart every care, to his sympathy every sorrow, to his grace every corruption, to his arm every burden, without being conscious of new life, of augmented power, of increased heavenliness. Inquire of the man of prayer, what is the effect in his soul of close, filial communion with God? Ask the reflective mind what is the effect upon his spirit of holy meditation? Ask the conscience much beneath the cross, what is the result of the constant sprinkling of the atoning blood? And, as with one voice, and with one utterance, each believer will answer—"LIFE!" O, there is an energizing influence in spirituality, a quickening of the spiritual life in heavenly-mindedness, which he only can understand, whose converse is much with things heavenly, much with God. There is life in prayer, life in the word, life in ordinances, life in the enjoyment of vital religion, which transmits the thrill of its deep pulsations through the whole soul. Nor life alone in these. But when the storm of adversity blows—when sore affliction comes—when the "noise of the water-spout" is heard, and the tossing waves and the foaming billows roll over the soul—when the shadow of death is settling upon all creature-good; then, even then, the spiritual mind panting after life exclaims, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me." "This is my comfort in my affliction: for Your word has quickened me." And what is all this but the pledge and the prelude of the glorious consummation and crown of all—the life that is to come, even life everlasting?

But not life alone; "peace" also is a fruit of spiritual-mindedness. What *peace of conscience* does that individual possess whose mind is stayed upon spiritual things! It is as much the reward as it is the effect of his cultivated heavenliness. The existence of this precious blessing, however, supposes the exposure of the spiritual mind to much that has a tendency to rule and disturb its equanimity and repose. The Christian is far from being entirely exempt

from those chafings and disquietudes which seem inseparable from human life. To the brooding anxieties arising from *external* things—life's vicissitudes, mutations, and disappointments—there are added, what are peculiar to the child of God, the *internal* things that distract—the cloudings of guilt, the agitations of doubt, the corrodings of fear, the mourning of penitence, the discipline of love. But through all this there flows a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God. Coursing its way along the windings of a soul—often presenting to the eye the moral scenery of precipice and valley, undulating and wild, and all enshrouded in gloom, this peace of God diffuses a calmness, serenity, and sunlight over the spirit, creating in the heart an emotion and a melody more like the repose of the upper sanctuary, and the chimings of the heavenly Sabbath, than the feelings and music of earth. It is the peace of the heavenly mind, the peace which Jesus procured, which God imparts, and which the Holy Spirit seals. A heavenly mind soars above a poor dying world, living not upon a creature's love, or smile—casting its daily need upon the heart of a kind Providence—*anxious for nothing, but with supplication and thanksgiving making known its requests unto God—indifferent to the turmoil, and vexations, and chequered scenes of worldly life, and living in simple faith and holy pleasing on Christ—thus detached from earth, and moving heavenwards by the attractions of its placid coast, it realizes a peace which passes all understanding. And if this be the present of the heavenly mind, what will be the future of the mind in heaven? Heaven is the abode of perfect peace. There are no cloudings of guilt, no tossings of grief, no agitations of fear, no corrodings of anxiety there. "There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."* It is the peace of perfect purity—it is the repose of complete satisfaction. It is not so much the entire absence of all sorrow, as it is the actual presence of all holiness, that constitutes the charm and the bliss of future glory. The season of sorrow is frequently converted into that of secret joy—Christ making our very griefs to sung. But the occasion of sin is always that of bitter grief; our backslidings often, like scorpions, entwined around our hearts. Were there even—as most assuredly there will not be—sadness in heaven, there might still be the accompaniment of happiness; but were there sin in heaven—the shadow of a shade of guilt—it would becloud and embitter all. Thus, then, as heaven is the abode of perfect peace, he who on earth has his conversation most in heaven, approximates in his feelings the nearest to the heavenly state. His "peace shall be as a river, and his righteousness as the waves of the sea." O that our hearts were more yielding to the sweet, and holy, and powerful attractions of the heavenly world! Then would our conversation be more in heaven.

**In conclusion. How great and exalted the heavenly calling of the Christian! Aim to walk worthy of it. Debase it not by allying it with a carnal mind. Impair not your spiritual life by enchaining it to spiritual death. Let the friendships which you cultivate, and the relationships of life which you form, be heavenly in their nature, and eternal in their duration. Seek to please God in all things. Rest not where you are, even though you may have attained beyond your fellows. Let your *standard* of heavenly-mindedness be not that of the saints, but of Christ. Study not a copy, but the Original. High aims will secure high attainments. He is the most heavenly, and the happiest, who the most closely resembles his Divine Master. Be much in your closet. There is no progress in spiritual-mindedness apart from much prayer; prayer is its nourishment, and its element. But leave not your religion there; let it accompany you into the world. While careful not to carry your business into your religion—thus secularizing and degrading it—be careful to carry your religion into your business—high integrity, holy principle, godly fear—thus imparting an elevation and sanctity to all its concerns. Be the man of God wherever you are. Let these solemn words be held in vivid remembrance—"I have created you for my glory. I have formed you for my praise. You are my witnesses, says the Lord." Heavenly-mindedness can only be maintained by the strictest vigilance. It is a delicate and fragile flower, susceptible of every variation of the spiritual atmosphere. Guard against that which checks its growth. Many are not aware how much frivolity of spirit, light conversation, foolish jesting, witticisms at the expense of Scripture-sanctity, novel reading, carnal music, unfit the heart for communion with God, and lessen the tone of its spirituality. Close communion with mere nominal religious professors is particularly to be avoided. Much more injury to spiritual-mindedness accrues from intimate friendship with such, than from those who assert no pretensions to a religious character. With the one we are apt to be less on our guard than the other. Avoid the world's amusements: they will eat as a canker into the very core of your spirituality. "Do not be conformed to this world," is a prohibition. "Our conversation is in heaven," is an exhortation which should never be absent from the eye of a traveler to the heavenly city. And why should not our conversation be in heaven? Are not its attractions many**

**and powerful? It is a holy place, and it is the place of the holy. There are the city of the living God, and the heavenly Jerusalem, and an innumerable company of angels, and the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and God the Judge of all, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. How rich is heaven! And there we, too, will shortly be. Why, then, should not our**

conversation be there? It will be recollected that when the high priest entered within the veil, bearing in his hands the blood of atonement and the smoking censer, the eyes of the congregation, who stood outside, followed him to the entrance as the curtain parted, and then veiled him from their gaze. And many a thrilling heart and trembling hope followed him within that holy place, its fervent sympathies clustering around him while he presented the offerings, and made intercession for the people. And many a longing eye intently and fondly watched for his return, when, with uplifted hands, he would bless the waiting congregation. Our great High Priest has passed within the veil. As our Advocate he fills heaven's high chancery. He loves us—remembers us—sympathizes with us—intercedes for us, and wears our names on his breast-plate and his ephod. And soon he will return in person to bless, with the first resurrection-glory, all those who "love his appearing." Oh! shall not our hearts be more where our most precious treasure is, and where our holiest and fondest hopes center, and where we ourselves shall shortly be? "What manner of people ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness," who are "looking for and hastening unto the Lord's coming?" "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus." The Lord grant that you may increasingly experience, that "to be spiritually-minded is life and peace;" and that in order to attain to this blessed state, we must live upon the Lord Jesus—be filled with the Spirit—be often at God's confessional—and, taking up our cross daily, be pressing onward and upward, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

## **CHAPTER 7.**

### **"The Enmity of the Carnal Mind"**

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Romans 8:7.

"The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." Romans 8:7

Having spoken of carnal-mindedness, the Apostle naturally proceeds to describe the carnal mind itself; exhibiting its great distinctive feature—hostility to God as manifested in non-subjection to the Divine government. To each of these particulars let us in the present chapter direct our attention.

"The carnal mind is enmity against God." There is something appalling to our moral feelings in the bare announcement of the subject. The spectacle is an awful one in the extreme, of the finite armed in dead hostility to the Infinite—of a creature measuring his power with God—opposing his will to God's will—his way to God's way—his end to God's end. And yet how disproportionate are our profoundest feelings of horror and commiseration to the atrocious nature and the tremendous consequences of the crime! Enmity against God! the greatest and holiest, the best and most powerful, of beings and of friends! And why this enmity? Upon what, in the character of God, or in the nature of his government, is this sworn hostility grounded? Is it because he is essential love? perfectly holy? strictly righteous? infinitely wise and powerful? For which of these perfections does the sinner hate him? Is it because he gave his Son to die for man, laying him a bleeding sacrifice on the altar of justice for human transgression? Is it because the sun of his goodness shines upon every being, and that he opens his hand and supplies the need of every living thing? Is it because he exercises forbearance and long-suffering, and is slow to anger, and of great kindness? For which of these good works does the sinner hate him? And to what extent is this enmity displayed? It rests not short of the destruction of the Divine existence. Man is at war with the very being of God. Atheism is not so common a crime of our humanity as some suppose. Theism is the natural conviction of the human mind. The idea of a Supreme Being is consistent with man's existence. Where has there ever existed a people without a God? or a nation without a temple? Paganism, prostrate at the shrine of idolatry; and apostate Christendom, bathing the standard of the cross in the blood of the martyrs; and Formalism, solemnly strutting in the crimson and purple of its gorgeous rites—each owns its belief in the existence of a God. But what God? Plainly not the God of the Bible; but a deity of its imagination. But in the existence of absolute atheism we are slow to avow our belief.

From the idea of a Deity it is impossible for the human mind to escape. "The fool has said in his heart, No God;" that is, "I desire no God." He does not deny His existence; he does not say there is no God, but he desires no communion with Him. He may at times attempt to reason himself into a belief in the utter negation of a Deity; but in the still hour of night the truth flashes

upon his mind with irresistible and overwhelming conviction—"There is a God! and I cannot overcome, I cannot escape him." Yes, the carnal mind is enmity with the being of God. Sin is destructive of all being. Man is a suicide—he has destroyed himself; a homicide—his influence destroys others; a deicide—he would, were it in his power, annihilate the very being of God. What a proof of this have we in the crucifixion of the Son of God! When God brought himself as near to man as Infinity could approach, he exclaimed, "This is the Heir; come, let us kill Him!" and then proceeded to consummate the crime by nailing him to the tree!

But if further evidence were needed of man's decided and deadly hostility, we have it in the sentiments and feelings he cherishes towards the Lord Jesus Christ: "He that hates me," says our Lord, "hates my Father also." How completely this declaration sweeps away all the fancied reverence and admiration for God which floats before the imagination of the carnal mind in its profound slumber! The God of whom he has thus been dreaming is not the God of revelation, but the god of his own creation. He is not the holy God whom the Bible makes known—of whom Jesus is the living and visible embodiment—but an imaginary being clothed with attributes, and administering a government harmonizing with the corrupt tastes and sinful propensities of his carnal mind. Away with your religion of nature, of sentiment, of poetry! All that you know of the music of God, is the Eolian breathing of the wind; all that you see of the glory of God, is the brilliance of the star; all that you understand of the eternity of God, is the expanse of the ocean; and of the omnipotence of God, is the fastness of the mountain and the rock. A disciple, not of Christ, but of Spinoza, your religion is sheer Pantheism, confounding with His material works the Maker and Governor of the universe. The god whom you profess to adore and worship is not the God manifested in Christ, whose justice and holiness, whose wisdom and truth, are blended and harmonized with grace and love in the cross of Calvary. Of what value is your fancied admiration of God's character, while yet hating, despising, and rejecting the Son, who is the "brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person"? Your heart is a stranger to holiness, and your mind to peace, while prostrate before a deity of your own imagination—a fictitious god. "Oh! give us some steady object for our minds to rest upon!" was a common exclamation in the prayers of the great and good Chalmers, in the days of his unregeneracy, when tossed amid the breakers of Mirabaud's pantheistic philosophy. Of this want, you, my reader, are perhaps deeply and painfully sensible. There is nothing in your creed; nothing in your vague, shadowy, unreal conception of Deity, to fix your thoughts, to soothe your

spirit, to allay, your fears, to awaken your affections, and to inspire your hope. Your altar is reared, and your incense is offered, but it is to the "*unknown god*."

But what is the alleged ground of this hostility, of the carnal mind? The non-subjection of the mind to the government of God. "It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The secret is now revealed. God is the moral governor of the universe. Oh! this is the real issue between him and the sinner. This constitutes the real secret of his alarming, inveterate hostility to the Divine Being. The question at issue is—Who shall govern—God or the sinner? The non-subjection of the carnal heart to God's law—its rebellion against the Divine government—clearly indicates the side of this question which the carnal mind takes. You may, my reader succeed in reasoning yourself into the belief that you admire, adore, and love God as your Creator and Benefactor, and only feel a repugnance, and manifest an opposition, to him as a Lawgiver. But this is impossible in fact, however poetic or specious it may be in theory. In a purely human government we admit that the *person* and the *office* of the judge may be separable. For example, an individual may be a personal friend of the sovereign, and yet an avowed opponent of his government. Doubtless, during the Commonwealth there were many who loved Cromwell for his piety, and admired him for his manliness, who yet condemned many of the measures of his government as harsh and despotic. But the moral government of God does not admit of this refined distinction. His nature and his office, his person and his throne, are one and inseparable. No individual can possibly be a friend to the being of God, who is not equally friendly to the government of God. Now the moral law is offensive to the carnal mind. And why? Because of the *holiness* of its nature, and the strictness of its requirements. It not only takes cognizance of *external* actions, but it touches the very springs of action, the motives that lie concealed in the human heart, and regulate the life. *It demands supreme affection and universal obedience.* To this the carnal mind demurs. If Jehovah will relax the rigor of his law, and abate the stringency of its requirements, and soften the sternness of its demands—if, in other words, God will lay aside his regal character, descend from his throne, forego his sovereignty, and lay aside his scepter—then the war is at an end; the controversy ceases; the rebel lays down his weapons. It clearly appears, then, that the whole ground of dispute between these two extremes of being resolves itself into the question—"Who shall reign, God or the sinner?" But will God yield his right to the throne? Never! Can he relax one iota of the strictness of his law? Impossible! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one tittle of his law shall fail. If in any single case this could have been done, surely it

would have been in that of his beloved Son. And yet, Jesus neither asked as a favor, nor accepted as a boon, the slightest abatement of the law he came to fulfil. He entered into no negotiation for the least compromise either of the stringency of the precept or the sternness of the penalty. It was the glory of the law that it demanded all from Christ, and it was the honor of Christ that he gave all the law demanded. Sinner! behold the true cause of your present hatred and hostility to God. You are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, because your mind is unregenerate. Your heart is unholy, and you dispute God's right to govern you.

There are some solemn conclusions to which we may arrive from this subject.

The utter impossibility of the sinner's admission into heaven with the carnal mind unchanged is most clear. Suppose an opposite ease. Imagine an unrenewed soul suddenly transported to heaven. In a moment it finds itself in the light, and holiness, and presence of God. What a scene of wonder, purity, and glory has burst upon its gaze! But, awful fact! horror of horrors! it is confronted face to face with its great enemy, the God it hated, loathed, and denied! Is it composed? Is it at home? Is it happy? Impossible! It enters the immediate presence of the Divine Being, its heart rankling with the virus of deadly hate, and its hand clutching the uplifted weapon. It carries its sworn malignity and its drawn sword to the very foot of the throne of the Eternal. "Take me out of here!" it exclaims; "this is not my heaven!" And then it departs "to its own place." But we are supposing an impossible case. For it is written of the heavenly city, "There shall in no way enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatever works abomination, or makes a lie; but those who are written in the Lamb's book of life." Listen to the declaration of the Great Teacher sent from God, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Do you ask what this new birth means? We reply, you must become a new creature in Christ Jesus. You must throw down your weapons before the Eternal God of heaven and earth. You must give up the quarrel. You must relinquish the controversy. You must cease to fight against God. You must submit to the law and government of Jehovah. Your will must bow to God's will. Your heart must beat in unison with God's heart. Your mind must harmonize with God's mind. Implacable hatred must give place to adoring love—deep ungodliness, to a nature breathing after holiness—stern opposition, to willing obedience—the creature, to the Creator—yourself, to God. O blissful moment! when the controversy ceases, and God and your soul are at agreement through Christ Jesus. When, dropping the long-raised weapon, you grasp his outstretched hand, and rush into his expanded arms,

fall a lowly, believing penitent upon his loving bosom, take hold of his strength, and are at peace with him. O happy moment! No more hatred, no more enmity, no more opposition now! It is as though all heaven had come down and entered your soul—such joy, such peace, such love, such assurance, such hope do you experience! What music now floats from these words: "No condemnation in Christ Jesus." How blessed now to lean upon the breast which once you hated, and find it a pillow of love; to meet the glance which once you shunned, and find it the expression of forgiveness; to feel at home in the presence of him to whom once you said, "Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of your ways."

What an evidence of the reign of grace in the soul, when the mind fully acquiesces in the moral government of God! "The Lord God Omnipotent reigns," is the adoring anthem of every heart brought into subjection to the law of God. To the Christian how composing is the thought, that the government is upon Christ's shoulders, and that he sits upon the throne judging rightly. From hostility to the law of God, his heart is now brought to a joyful acquiescence in its precepts, and to a deep delight in its nature. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." "O Lord!" he exclaims, "my holiness is in submission to your authority. My happiness flows from doing and suffering your will. I rejoice that the scepter is in your hands, and I desire that the thoughts of my mind, and the affections of my heart, may be brought into perfect obedience to yourself. Be my soul your kingdom, be my heart your throne, and let grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life."

## **CHAPTER 8.**

### **"Pleasing God"**

"So then those who are in the flesh cannot please God." Romans 8:8.

"Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God." Romans 8:8

We have been contemplating, in the preceding expositions of this chapter, some of the various phases of the carnal mind. The Apostle now proceeds to a necessary consequence of the hostility of a mind governed by the flesh, and in rebellion against the law of God. "So then those who are in the flesh cannot please God." The doctrine thus set forth is, the utter impossibility of the unregenerate pleasing God. Having considered this primary truth, we shall

then place in contrast with it the especial points in which the regenerate may be said to please God.

The utter impossibility of a carnal mind pleasing God springs from the necessity of the case. As the object of his displeasure, and as dwelling in a nature not only diametrically opposite to his own, in which lurks the latent virulence of a deep and implacable hatred, but every faculty and power of which is armed in the deadliest hostility to his government and being, it is impossible that it can please him. In whatever point of light you contemplate the unregenerate—taking the most intellectual and refined view, the utmost that can be said is, "He is in the flesh." We do not forget that there are *degrees of carnality*, even as there are degrees of spirituality; nevertheless, the law of God takes into account no degrees, recognizes no shades of difference, but regards all alike, unregenerate. The Bible solemnly and emphatically affirms, that a carnal mind cannot please a holy and righteous God. How could it possibly be otherwise? The apostle declares, "In me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing." What! no good thing? Nothing spiritually good? No, nothing. The purest ethics of the carnal mind are as the ointment of the apothecary which the fly has spoiled; and the most zealous and costly duties and sacrifices which it presents are but as 'splendid sins,' so long as that mind is yet under the dominion of the flesh. But these are only general statements of a most important truth; we pass to a few particulars. There being *no personal acceptance* of those who are in the flesh, consequently, whatever they do in the way of religious service cannot be accepted of God. First, the person, and then the gift, is God's order in the great method of our justification. We might refer to the narrative of Queen Esther's interview with the King Ahasuerus, and to Jacob's meeting with Esau, as illustrating this principle. It is most clear, that in both these instances—had Esther urged her suit in behalf of her nation without having awakened in the heart of the king a feeling of complacent regard towards her person—and had the offering of Jacob to his incensed brother preceded the presentation of himself, in either case there must have been a decided and mortifying, if not fatal result. Apply these illustrations to *the believer*. What imparts divine acceptance to his service? Why do his prayers ascend before God like fragrant incense floating from a golden censer? Why does his lowliest offering of love cast into the Lord's treasury out-value the most splendid and affluent offerings of all the unconverted? Why is a sigh so full of meaning, and a tear so costly, and a desire so eloquent, and a heaven-lifted glance so expressive to God? Oh, it is because he is well pleased with his well-beloved Son, standing in whom the person of each believing sinner is fully accepted. We place this vital truth

broadly before the unrenewed mind, and basing upon it the one important inquiry, we press its solemn consideration—How can you do that which is well-pleasing and acceptable to a holy God, while your person is to him an object of just, and holy, and utter abhorrence? While rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ, and refusing and despising the robe of his righteousness, with what complacency can God regard your meaningless modes of worship, your formal duties, and your heartless offerings? Will he not say, "Why do you keep parading through my courts with your worthless sacrifices? The incense you bring me is a stench in my nostrils! Your celebrations of the new moon and the Sabbath day, and your special days for fasting—even your most pious meetings—are all sinful and false. I want nothing more to do with them. I hate all your festivals and sacrifices. I cannot stand the sight of them! From now on, when you lift up your hands in prayer, I will refuse to look. Even though you offer many prayers, I will not listen." Isaiah 1:12-15. It was the *robe* of the elder brother that made Jacob's offering of venison savory and acceptable to Isaac. It is the righteousness of Christ, whose loveliness is upon us, which makes our every act of service and homage of love, an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet smelling savor.

The *absence of faith* in the unregenerate must render all the religious doings of the sinner equally displeasing to God. "For without faith it is impossible to please him." The first life we live is sense; the second is reason; the third, through the regenerating grace of the Spirit, is faith. And, until a man reaches this life he moves in an orbit unilluminated by one ray from the sun of God's love. How can he please God whose whole existence is a direct denial of God? "Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar." God a liar! Astounding words! And yet to this awful conclusion unbelief comes. Your unbelief is a practical denial of his existence. Your unbelief is a practical denial of his sovereignty. You live as if there were no God! And, in your non-subjection to his law, you exclude him from the government of his own world. How can you, then, in your present course, do that which is pleasing to God? Oh, did you but truly, and in faith, grapple with that great foundation-truth of revealed religion, the being of God, believing that God is—did you but really believe in the existence of a hell—and did you but truly believe that God sent his beloved Son to save sinners from going down into that hell, you would not—no, you could not—live the life of practical atheism and ungodliness you now are living—a life of sin and of unbelief, of impenitence and worldliness; without God, without Christ, without hope in the world! Impossible! Faith is a quickening, elevating, sanctifying principle. A living faith produces living works. A divine faith purifies the heart. A heaven-descending faith works by

love, endures as seeing Him who is invisible, and has respect unto the recompense of reward. "That which is not faith is sin." Apply this principle to all the religious duties of those who are still in the flesh, and by it test their real worth and acceptableness to God.

And what is the entire absence of love to God in the unregenerate but another confirmation of the same truth—God's displeasure against man, and man's utter inability to please him. The great constraining motive of the sacrifice with which God is pleased is love. Where this principle of love is not in operation there is lacking that which gives worth and acceptableness to the act, however valuable and splendid that act may be. The divine moving-spring is absent; and all the works of the soul, if they move at all, are set in motion by a false action, and in a wrong direction. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Without this heavenly affection there is no true obedience. A man may give "all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned," yet destitute of love to God, his self-impooverishing charity, and his martyr zeal, avail him nothing. His religion is still but as "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

What an affecting picture have we presented here of an individual living in deep, utter oblivion of God, burying his one talent—perhaps, his ten—in the earth—himself a cumberer of the ground! What, dear reader, has the past of your life been? Has it all been displeasing to God? What! not one act, not one service, not one sacrifice acceptable to, and glorifying of, him? Astonished, if not appalled by the charge, you perhaps reply, "Have I then done nothing really pleasing to my Creator? I have given my substance to extend the gospel, and my charity to feed the poor, and my labor to promote the general good; I have been punctual in the discharge of my religious duties, and upright and generous in my dealings with my fellows, has all this not been pleasing to God?" We ask, But have you given him your heart? Have you fled out of your own righteousness, and taken refuge beneath the righteousness of the incarnate God? Have not all these things of which you boast, and upon which you place a strong reliance, been but the working out a righteousness of your own, in the spirit of the vain-glorying, self-justifying Pharisee, who retired from the temple as he entered it—a sinner under condemnation? Oh, were your spirit to wing its way this night into the presence of God, you would awake to the awful consciousness of having lived in this world *without a single act pleasing and acceptable to the holy, righteous Lord God!* Oh, that the Eternal Spirit might lay this solemn truth upon your heart, and lead you to deep self-searching, to ascertain why this life—for every pulsation and for every act of which you must one day give an account to God—has hitherto

been in opposition to the great end for which that God created and placed you here!

But this gloomy picture has its opposite—bright and beautiful. Reversed, it presents to our notice the character of those with whom God is pleased. They are *a spiritual people*, and God, who is a Spirit, must love and delight in that which harmonizes with his own nature. Faith may be feeble, and grace may be limited, and knowledge may be defective; yet, if there be just that strength of faith that travels to, and leans upon, the sacrifice of Jesus, and just that measure of love that constrains to *a sincere, though imperfect*, obedience, and just that extent of knowledge that knows Christ to be the Savior of a poor lost sinner, then, there is one who is pleasing to God. They are also an *accepted* people, and therefore their persons are pleasing to him. The delight of the Father in the person of his Son reveals to us the great secret of his marvellous delight in us. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Blessed truth to those who see enough defilement and imperfection in their best doings to cover them with eternal confusion and shame! who, after the most spiritual performances, are constrained to repair in penitence and confession to Him who bears the iniquity of his people's *holy things*. Sweet truth to fall back upon in all the failures and flaws we are perpetually discerning in our works, in our motives, and our ends, blots not appearing upon the surface, but visible to the microscopic eye of faith, which sees material for self-condemnation where others, in their fond and blind affection, approve and applaud. If God, my Father, is well pleased in his Son, then is it a truth, strictly inferential, that he is well pleased in me whom he beholds in his Son. But not their persons only, their *offerings* also are equally pleasing to God. "I will accept you," (the person first,) "with your sweet savor," (the offering next). Their *preceptive walk* likewise pleases him. Is the obedience of the child, springing from love, a pleasing and acceptable offering to a parent's heart? Ah! how imperfectly are we aware of the beauty and fragrance there are to God in a single act of filial, holy obedience, the fruit and offering of a Divine and deathless affection.

But it is a *universal* pleasing of God which the Scriptures of truth prescribe and enforce. "That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." As a minister of the Lord Jesus, see how the apostle felt the weight of this great precept—"For we speak as messengers who have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Good News. Our purpose is to please God, not people. He is the one who examines the motives of our hearts." 1 Thes. 2:4. Human opinion weighed lightly with him. What men thought of him as a preacher was

a matter of very little importance; the grand point, the all-absorbing thought and one aim of his life was, so to preach as to please God. Oh, for the Christianity and spirit of Paul! Lord! vouchsafe it in a double measure to all who preach your great name. It is in this holy duty of aiming in all things to please God that we are sensible of such mighty power in prayer. "Whatever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." Prayer is a precious, priceless privilege. A present and potent weapon. All our blessings flow through its medium, and all our achievements we owe to its instrumentality. Whatever, then, adds to the power of prayer, should be hailed by us with gratitude, and employed with vigor. Would we be more mighty and prevalent in prayer? then let us in all things desire so to walk as to please our heavenly Father. "You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways." Isaiah 64:5

But what are some of the footprints of this walk? How may we trace it? *Unreserved obedience* is an undoubted mark of being well-pleasing to God. An obedience that asks no abatement of the precept, but that follows the Lord fully in its observance, not from an enlightened judgment, but from a love—constrained heart—walking, as did the primitive saints, in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly—is indeed well pleasing to God. Oh, let there be no reserves in our obedience! Let us withhold from Christ no part of his purchased inheritance; but surrender all at his feet, whose heart's blood was the purchase-price of all. "Lord, however strait be the path, and painful the cross, and self-denying the precept, sincerely would I walk uprightly in all your ways, and fully follow you in all your commands, leaving the consequences of my simple and implicit obedience to your control. I can endure the hatred of the world, the alienation of friends, the coldness of relatives, and can take the spoiling of my earthly goods joyfully, if you, my Lord, sustain me with your grace, and cheer me with your presence, and solace me with your love."

Another footprint may be descried in *the walk of faith* by which the Christian journeys to his heavenly home. As unbelief is most dishonoring, so faith is most honoring to the Lord Jesus. What a revenue of praise accrues from it to his name! To repair with our anxiety, the moment it occurs, to his sufficiency; with our corruptions, the moment they are discovered, to his grace; with our sorrow, the moment it is felt, to his sympathy; with our wound, the moment it is inflicted, to his love; with our guilt, the moment it is detected, to his blood; oh! do you think not that this walk of faith is most pleasing to the Lord? Let us beware of that which impairs the simplicity of this our walk, and causes us

to stumble or start aside. We must be cautious, in the varied circumstances of our history, of applying first to a human arm for support, or to a human bosom for sympathy. With this, the Lord cannot be well pleased. But let us not hesitate to bear them at once to the only appointed Source of all our supply: disclosing our needs to the full Savior, our wanderings to our Heavenly Father, our griefs and burdens to our Elder Brother and Friend; and in thus walking by faith, we shall have the divine assurance in our souls, our rejoicing this—the testimony of our conscience that we please the Lord.

To believing *children* how touching and forcible is this precept—"Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord." Not less so to Christian domestics—"Servants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men." Yes, to all who bear the Savior's name how solemn the exhortation—"Whether therefore you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Thus universal and binding is this sublime principle of action, which the gospel furnishes to all the followers of Christ. Oh, let us seek closely to resemble the two illustrious examples set before us in the Word, of this high and holy walk. The minor one—because purely human—of Enoch, who, "before his translation had this testimony, that he pleased God." The higher one—because the human was blended with the Divine—of Jesus, who could say, "I do always those things which please Him." Breathing from our heart on your behalf, beloved reader, the sublime and touching prayer of the Apostle, we conclude this chapter: "And now, may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, equip you with all you need for doing his will. May he produce in you, through the power of Jesus Christ, all that is pleasing to him. Jesus is the great Shepherd of the sheep by an everlasting covenant, signed with his blood. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen." Hebrews 13:20.

## **CHAPTER 9.**

### **"The Indwelling of the Spirit in the Regenerate"**

"But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Romans 8:9.

**"You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ." Romans 8:9**

**"But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them are not Christians at all.)"  
Romans 8:9**

**We have now arrived at those truths contained in this sublime chapter which have a more direct bearing on the experience of the children of God. Hitherto our topics have led us to address ourselves more especially to the unregenerate. Oh, that the solemn and searching delineations of unrenewed mind, of unsanctified affection, and of supreme devotion to self, gathered from the opening of the chapter, and pressed upon the reader's attention, may, by the power of the Holy Spirit, be received to the saving of the soul. Dismissing, then, the awful condition of the unconverted, the Apostle proceeds to address himself to the Christians at Rome, and at once plunges into the great mysteries and privileges, glories and hopes, of the believer's inner life. Two topics of thought invite our attention in this verse—The indwelling of the Spirit of God in the regenerate; and the great authenticating evidence of the fact—the possession of the Spirit of Christ. Let us discuss them in their order.**

## **THE INDWELLING OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN THE REGENERATE**

**Scuffed at by the proud boaster of human reason, rejected by the cold formalist, and hated by the avowed enemy of practical godliness, as this doctrine is, it is yet a vital truth, and of marvellous interest to the child of God. It is, in fact, his life. We admit its profoundness, mysteriousness, and inexplicability; yet, apart from its individual, heartfelt experience, all religion, so called, is a counterfeit and a delusion.**

**The doctrine of the personal indwelling of the Spirit has been reduced, in the creed of some, to a mere poetical conception. Assimilation to the character and disposition of the Spirit in that which is amiable, sympathizing, and generous, has been made to take the place of an actual and personal residence of the Holy Spirit. And thus the indwelling of the Spirit of God in the soul of**

the regenerate—one of the fundamental verities of our faith—is narrowed down to the skeleton idea of a mere resemblance to spiritual grace and excellence. But in opposition to this dwarfish conception of a gigantic truth, how bold and explicit are the delineations and assertions of the Holy Scriptures. "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." Observe where the Spirit is said to dwell, not in the *understanding*, the fatal error of many—but in the *heart*. Most certainly he enlightens the understanding with the truth, but he does not rest there. He makes his way to, and takes up his abode in, the renewed and sanctified heart. There he sheds abroad the love of God. There he inspires the cry of "Abba, Father." And be that cry never so faint, it yet is the breathing of the indwelling Spirit, and meets a response in the heart of God. How affecting are Paul's words to Timothy: "That good thing which was committed unto you keep by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us." Timothy had no spiritual strength of his own. The Apostle therefore reminds him of a truth which, in his conscious weakness, was well calculated to cheer his heart, and encourage him to cultivate and use for Christ's glory the spiritual gift bestowed upon him, namely, the power of the indwelling Spirit. That self-same Spirit dwells in all true believers. Let it constrain us to stir up our spiritual gifts and graces—so prone to slumber and become inert—and employ them more devotedly for the Lord.

But what is THE GREAT EVIDENCE OF THE INDWELLING OF THE SPIRIT? Our possession of the Spirit of Christ. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." Let us briefly direct our attention to this truth. It will be observed that the title is changed. In the former clause of the verse he is styled the "Spirit of God." In the latter clause, he is denominated the "Spirit of Christ." Why the Spirit of Christ? Because he proceeds from Christ, equally as of the Father. "Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit," clearly recognizing a power on the part of Christ to send the Spirit. Our Lord, when alluding to the Holy Spirit, emphatically says, "Whom I will send unto you." What declaration could more clearly set forth the emanation of the Spirit from Christ, than this, thus justifying the title ascribed to him by the Apostle, as the "Spirit of Christ?" We are here supplied with a strong argument in favor of the Deity of the Spirit predicated upon the unity of the Father and the Son in the one Divine Spirit: the Holy Spirit, proceeding from, and wearing the title of both, must conclusively establish an essential unity of mind.

The reasonableness of such an evidence, authenticating the fact of the indwelling of the Spirit, is too obvious to question. An individual claiming to be Christ's, yet not possessing the Spirit of Christ, lacks the only irrefragable proof which establishes the validity of his claim, and thus his profession is falsified. But what is it to possess the Spirit of Christ?

The Spirit of Christ is the great convincer of sin. "He shall convince the world of sin." Have you thus received him? Has he discovered to you the moral leprosy of your nature, the exceeding sinfulness of sin? Do you know anything of the conflict of which the Apostle speaks in the preceding chapter of this Epistle—the law of the mind in battle with the law of the members? And has this discovery led you to self-condemnation, to self-renunciation, to lay your mouth in the dust before God? If this be so, then the Spirit of Christ is a Spirit of conviction in you, and by this you may know that you are Christ's.

The Spirit of Christ leads to Christ. He is to the sinner what John was to the Messiah—he goes before as the Forerunner of the Lord's salvation. He prepares the way, and heralds the coming of Jesus into the soul. This was one specific object for which he was sent, and which entered essentially into his mission—to lead men to Christ. Has he led you to Christ? Can you say, "Christ is made unto me wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption?" What do you think of Christ? Is his blood precious? Does his righteousness give you peace? Does his grace subdue your sins? Do you in sorrow travel to his sympathy, in weakness take hold of his strength, in perplexity seek his counsel, in all your steps acknowledge and wait for him? Is Christ thus all and in all to you? Then you have the Spirit of Christ. This we venture to assert for your encouragement. You may resort to Christ, and there may be no sensible apprehension, no realizing touch, no manifested presence; yet, if your heart goes out after Jesus, if your spirit travels alone to him—praying for his sympathy, panting for his grace, thirsting for his love, and you are led to say, "Lord, the desire of my heart is to your name, and to the remembrance of you. I seem not to see you, to touch you, to apprehend you; yet I come, and I find a heaven in coming; and for ten thousand worlds I dare not, I could not stay away"—then, dear reader, you have the Spirit of Christ, and are Christ's.

Not only does the Spirit lead to Christ, but he also conforms those thus led to the image of Christ. He guides us to Christ, not for consolation and instruction only, but also for assimilation. If we are humble, we have the Spirit of

**Christ—for he was humble. If we are meek, we have the Spirit of Christ—for he was meek. If we believe, we have the Spirit of Christ—for he lived a life of faith. If we love God, we have the Spirit of Christ—for he was the incarnation of love. If we are holy, we have the Spirit of Christ—for he was without sin. If we are obedient, meek, and self-denying in suffering, silent in provocation, submissive in chastisement, patient in tribulation, and rejoicing in hope, then have we the Spirit of Christ, for he was all this. Thus, the possession of this immense, this indispensable blessing, comprises two grand things—first, to become the subject of an actual and permanent indwelling of the Spirit; and, second, to be assimilated in character and disposition to the Savior. And while it is most certain that, if the first-mentioned blessing is attained, the second follows, yet it is to the second we are to look as the fruit and evidence of the first. The question, "Am I Christ's?" hinges upon the question, "Have I the Spirit of Christ?"**

**The subject lays the basis for the most solemn exhortation and appeal. As a temple of the Holy Spirit, yield yourself to his Divine and gracious power. Bend your ear to his softest whisper—your will to his gentlest sway—your heart to his holy and benevolent influence. In not hearkening to his voice, and in not yielding to his promptings, we have been great losers. Often has he incited to communion with God, and because the time was not seasonable, or the place not convenient, you stifled his persuasive voice, resisted his proffered aid, and thus slighted and grieved, he has retired. And lo! when you have risen to pray, God has covered himself as with a cloud that your prayer could not pass through. Oh, seek to have an ear attuned to his softest accents, and a heart constrained to an instant compliance with his mildest dictates. The greatest blessing we possess is the possession of the Spirit.**

**And Oh, to be Christ's—to be his gift, his purchase, his called saint, his lowly disciple—what an inestimable privilege! But how may we be quite sure that this privilege is ours? If we have the Spirit of Christ, we are in very deed Christians. It is the superscription of the King, the mark of the Shepherd, the Lord's impress of himself upon the heart. And how sanctifying this privilege! "Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." "Let those that have named the name of Christ depart from all iniquity." And if we are Christ's now, we shall be Christ's to all eternity. It is a union that cannot be dissolved. Every believer in Jesus is "sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the pledge of our inheritance." And as we have the pledge of the inheritance, we shall as assuredly possess the inheritance itself.**

Lastly, the Spirit of Christ is an active, benevolent Spirit. It bore the Savior, when he was in the flesh, from country to country, from city to city, from house to house, preaching his own gospel to lost man. "He went about doing good." If we have the Spirit of Christ we shall be prompted to a like Christian love and activity on behalf of those who possess not the gospel, or who, possessing it, slight and reject the mercy. The Spirit of Christ is essentially a missionary Spirit. It commenced its labor of love at Jerusalem, and from that its center, worked its way with augmenting sympathy and widening sphere until it embraced the world as the field of its labor. Ah! that we manifest so little of this Spirit, ought to lead us to deep searchings of heart, and stir us up to earnest prayer: "Lord, make me more earnest for the salvation of souls, for the advancement of your kingdom. Grant me this evidence of being yours—the possession of your Spirit, constraining me to a more simple and unreserved consecration of my talents, my substance, my rank, my influence, my time, myself, to the establishment of your truth, the advancement of your cause, and thus to the wider diffusion of your glory in the earth."

## **CHAPTER 10.**

### **"The Body Dead, but the Spirit Life"**

"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Romans 8:10.

"But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness." Romans 8:10

"Since Christ lives within you, even though your body will die because of sin, your spirit is alive because you have been made right with God." Romans 8:10

We are, in the first clause of this passage, conducted to another and more advanced stage in the spiritual life—the indwelling of Christ, and the great blessing which follows. There are some experimental truths in the Christian faith which, from their overpowering magnitude and sanctity, the timid mind is slow to recognize, and the heart to believe. Of such is the doctrine before us. And yet this truth—the indwelling of Christ—is interwoven with the very texture of the Bible. With what distinctness and emphasis it is declared— "Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be

reprobates?" "He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, dwells in me, and I in him." "I in them." What single truth can be more clearly affirmed? That it has been but dimly perceived, and in some cases awfully perverted, is but to assert that to which every truth is exposed. Its greatest abuse has been that which affirmed that the indwelling of Christ is an incorporation, and not a union of Christ and the believer only. So that some, predicating their heresy of this doctrine, have affirmed, "I am Christ!" "I am the Holy Spirit!" and thus many have been deluded and drawn away. But the indwelling of Christ in the believer is no more an incorporate union than the land and the sea, or the light and the air, or the soul and the body are an incorporation, or are essentially the same, because they have a union of contact one with the other. And yet the truth for which we plead is a close, personal union. Christ is in the believer, just as the believer is in Christ. We cannot be said to be in the grace of Christ, but we are in Christ himself as the Head of his mystical body. So Christ is in us, not figuratively by his grace, but really by his Spirit. Now, that Christ should thus spiritually dwell in his saints is no wonder, since he received them as a gift, purchased them by his blood, won them by his grace, called them by his Spirit, and is now in heaven preparing for them an eternal mansion. That he should thus dwell in the hearts of all the regenerate, taking a personal, full, and irrevocable possession of them for himself, is perfectly congruous with all that he has done and still is doing for them.

We now approach a solemn fact asserted in this passage: "The body is dead because of sin." What body is referred to here? Certainly not, as some have supposed, the body of sin. Who can with truth affirm of it that it is dead? The individual who claims as his attainment a state of sinless perfection, an entire victory over the evil propensities and actings of his fallen nature, has yet to learn the alphabet of experimental Christianity. Pride is the baneful root, and a fall is often the fatal consequence of such an error. Oh no! the body of sin yet lives, and dies not but with death itself. We part not with innate and indwelling sin but with the parting breath of life, and then we part with it forever. But it is the natural body to which the Apostle refers. And what an affecting fact is this! Redeemed by the sacrifice, and inhabited by the Spirit of Christ, though it be, yet this material fabric, this body of our humiliation, tends to disease, decay, and death; and, sooner or later, wrapped in its shroud, must make its home in the grave, and mingle once more with its kindred dust. "The body is dead because of sin." Our redemption by Christ exempts us not from the conflict and the victory of the last enemy. We must confront the grim foe, must succumb to his dread power, and wear his pale conquests upon our brow. We must die—are dying men—because of sin. "Death has passed upon

**all men, for that all have sinned." And this law remains unrepealed, though Christ has delivered us from the curse. From this humiliating necessity of our nature, even the non-condemned find no avenue of escape; from this terrible**

**conflict, no retreat. One event happens to the wicked and the righteous—they both leave the world by the same dismal process of dissolution. But the character of death is essentially changed; and herein lies the great difference. In the one case, death is armed with all its terrors; in the other, it is invested with all its charms—for death has an indescribable charm to the believer in Jesus. Christ did not die to exempt us from the process of death, but he died to exempt us from the sting of death. If, because of original and indwelling sin in the regenerate, they must taste of death; yet, because of pardoned sin in the regenerate, the "bitterness of death is past." If, because there exists a virus in the body, the body must dissolve; yet, because there exists an infallible antidote, the redeemed soul does not see death as it passes through the gloomy portal, and melts away into its own light, life, and immortality. How changed the character of death! If the body of the redeemed is under the sentence, and has within it the seeds of death, and must be destroyed, yet that death is to him the epoch of glory. It is then that the life within germinates and expands; it is then that he really begins to live. His death is the birthday of his immortality. Thus, in the inventory of the covenant, death ranks among the chief of its blessings, and becomes a covenant mercy. "Death is gain." "What!" exclaims the astonished believer, "death a blessing—a covenant blessing! I have been wont to contemplate it as my direst curse, to dread it as my greatest foe." Yes; if death is the sad necessity, it is also the precious privilege of our being. In the case of those who are in Christ Jesus, it is not the execution of a judicial sentence, but the realization of a covenant mercy. And as the Christian marks the symptoms of his approaching and inevitable dissolution—watching the slow but unmistakable advances of the fell destroyer—he can exclaim, as he realizes that there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus—**

**"Come, Death, shake hands;  
I'll kiss your bands,  
It is happiness for me to die.  
What! do you think  
That I will shrink?  
I go to immortality."**

**"Because of sin." Ah! it is this truth whose dark shadow flits across the**

brightness of the Christian's condition. To what are all our ailments, calamities, and sorrows traceable, but to sin? And why do we die? "Because of sin." The immediate and proximate causes of death are but secondary agents. Had we not transgressed, we then had not died. Deathlessness would have been our natural and inalienable birthright. And were we more spiritually-minded than we are, while we looked onward with steady faith to a signal and glorious triumph over the King of Terrors, we would blend with the bright anticipation of the coming victory the humbling conviction that we have sinned, and that therefore the body is dead.

"But the Spirit is life because of righteousness." What are we to understand by the term spirit? Our reply will at once go to exclude the idea of the Holy Spirit. Of the Third Person of the blessed Trinity it cannot be of whom the Apostle speaks. The only remaining interpretation, then, is that which restricts its meaning to the spiritual and immortal part of the believer—the regenerated spirit of man, and not the regenerating Spirit of God. If, as we have shown, the first part of the antithesis must be understood of the material frame, the second part must be understood of the spiritual nature, body and soul being placed in direct contrast. The cheering declaration, then, of the Apostle is, that the spiritual and immortal part of our nature is recovered from the curse, renewed and quickened with a divine and heavenly life. If the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness. The spirit is life—instinct with a new and deathless principle—because Christ is the righteousness of his people. On the broad basis of God's method of justification our spirit lives. In every point of view, Christ is identified with our spiritual life. We live a life of justification by Christ—a life of holiness from Christ—a life of faith in Christ and a life of immortality with Christ. Thus, in all its phases, "Christ is our life." O glorious truth! Welcome death—the spirit lives! Welcome the grave—the spirit is beyond it! Death! you can but touch the material fabric—the inner life towers above your reach, hidden with Christ in God. Grave! you can but imprison the body—the soul is at home with Jesus. I live, not because of any righteousness which I have wrought, but because Christ is my righteousness. I live on account of the Righteous One—I live in the Righteous One—and I shall live forever with the Righteous One. Thus is the spirit life because of righteousness. Oh, what a glorious immortality unveils to the eye of faith. If through the gloomy portals of death the spirit of the believer must pass, in its transit to eternity, life attends it, and life awaits it, and life crowns it. Animated with a deathless existence, clothed with the robe of a new-born immortality, it burst forth from its enthrallment, and, smiling back upon death, speeds its way to glory, honor,

**and endless life. To this life let us look forward. From a life now experienced, let us live for a life so soon to be enjoyed. The body must die.**

**But what of that? the spirit is life. And the life-inspired spirit will come back again, re-enter and re-animate the slumbering dust—and now, remodeled and spiritualized it will be with Christ and all the saints in the new heaven and the new earth, wherein will dwell righteousness.**

## **CHAPTER 11.**

### **"The Resurrection of Christ"**

**"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you." Romans 8:11.**

**"And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you." Romans 8:11**

**"The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as he raised Christ from the dead, he will give life to your mortal body by this same Spirit living within you." Romans 8:11**

**Having affirmed of the redeemed body that it was dead because of sin, the Apostle, as if anxious to rescue the saints from the humiliation of so affecting a truth, hastens to unveil the light which plays so brightly and cheerfully around each believer's tomb. He shows that light to spring from the fact of the resurrection of the Savior. This doctrine is the grand luminary of the Christian system—it touches and gilds with its brilliance each cardinal doctrine of our faith. If Christ has not been risen from the dead, then is that faith vain and lifeless; but if he is risen, then each truth becomes instinct with life; and hope, like the day-spring from on high, rises with light and glory upon the soul.**

**The credibility of this great fact is perhaps the first point to which the mind naturally directs its inquiry. But in the present instance the truth of the doctrine must be assumed rather than established. We are not writing for the skeptic, but for the believer. Not so much to convince as to confirm the mind.**

And yet, were we arguing the question with a disputant, we might pursue a simple line of reasoning, somewhat like this—That the body of our Lord left the tomb is a fact which even those who have attempted to invalidate the doctrine readily concede. The great question in dispute, then, is—Who removed it? Did the enemies of Christ? What would they have gained by that step? Would they not on the contrary have lost much? Would it not have weakened their declaration that he was an impostor, and have strengthened that of his apostles, that he was risen? Why did not the priests and rulers, who bribed the Roman soldiers to affirm that his disciples had first surreptitiously possessed themselves of the body, and then secreted it, prove their assertion to the satisfaction of all Jerusalem, and thus at once strike the death-blow at the infant religion, and overwhelm the apostles with infamy and scorn? With the power of search which they possessed, surely, this were a natural and an easy process. To have produced the still lifeless body of our Lord would have substantiated their assertion, and thus have set at rest a question, upon which interests of such moment hung, at once and forever. But what were the circumstances of our Lord's interment? They were all such as to strengthen the fact of his resurrection.

He was buried in a tomb hewn out of a rock. To have excavated that rock would have been a work of time, of immense difficulty, if not of utter impossibility. The exit of our Lord therefore from the tomb could only have been by the door through which he passed within it. And, as if to encircle the grave of the Savior with sentinels of unimpeachable veracity, the Holy Spirit informs us, that in the "place where he was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man laid." Thus, then, if that sepulcher were emptied, none other than the body of Jesus had broken from its lone captivity. The substitution of another for the corpse of the Savior, was beyond the range of possibility. And who are the witnesses? A company of poor, unlearned, and timid fishermen—as unskilled in the art of falsehood and collusion, as they were in the lettered sciences of their age. They had nothing earthly to gain in testifying to the fact, but everything to lose. Instead of human applause, and honor, and wealth, they were rewarded with every species of obloquy, deprivation, and suffering. And yet, oppressed by poverty and persecution, and with the gloomy machinery of torture—the dungeon, the rack, and the cross staring them in the face, they traveled everywhere, testifying to the skeptic philosophers of Athens, as to the unlettered peasants of Rome, that Christ was risen from the dead. Nor were they men likely to be imposed upon. They were at first strangely incredulous of the fact itself. How slow of heart were they to welcome the testimony that

their Lord was indeed alive. Retired from the sepulcher, where in love and sadness they had laid him, they met the holy women, who at the dawn of day had borne their aroma to the tomb, and returning, who proclaimed to the "eleven and to all the rest," that he was alive. Yet we are told, "their words seemed to them as idle tales." And when one of the witnesses to the credibility of the fact testified to Thomas, "We have seen the Lord," how was the testimony received? "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails," were the words of that unbelieving disciple, "and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." Thus reluctant to receive the fact of his resurrection, is it possible that they could have been easily imposed upon by a fiction? We may, then, safely leave the credibility of this cardinal doctrine of our faith to its own evidence, and pass on to other and more experimental views of the glorious truth.

We may refer for a moment to the necessity that Jesus should rise again from the dead; and this will supply a collateral argument in favor of the truth of the doctrine. It was necessary that he should make good his own prediction, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." That some of his enemies rightly understood him to refer to the temple of his body is evident from their subsequent allusion to these words, "We remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again." Our Lord thus fulfilled his own undeviating prediction. But the perfection of his mediatorial work also pleaded for its necessity. "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." The Father's glory was clearly interwoven with the fact—his honor, faithfulness, and power. Thus it is said, "Therefore are we buried with him by baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

But let us trace the effect of this truth in the believing soul, and this will supply us with no small evidence in favor of its credibility. For if the power of the fact is experienced, the fact itself must be certain. It is one thing to yield the assent of an informed understanding to a truth, and it is another to feel the influence of that truth in the heart. But what is it to sympathize with Christ's resurrection? It is to be a partaker of its quickening energy, to be sensible of its life-giving, life-elevating power. Oh, there is no single truth which embodies and conveys so much blessing to the believer as his Lord's resurrection. Trace its sanctifying tendency: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

To be sensible of this amazing power in the soul is to be born again—to be raised from the grave of corruption—to live on earth a heavenly, a resurrection-life—to have the heart daily ascending in the sweet incense of love, and prayer, and praise, where its risen Treasure is. It possesses, too, a most comforting power. What but this sustained the disciples in the early struggles of Christianity, amid the storms of persecution which else had swept them from the earth? They felt that their Master was alive. They needed no external proof of the fact. They possessed in their souls God's witness. The truth authenticated itself. The three days of his entombment were to them days of sadness, desertion, and gloom. Their sun had set in darkness and in blood, and with it every ray of hope had vanished. All they loved, or cared to live for, had descended to the grave. They had now no arm to strengthen them in their weakness—no bosom to sympathize with them in sorrow—no eye to which they could unveil each hidden thought and struggling emotion. But the resurrection of their Lord was the resurrection of all their buried joys. They now traveled to him as to a living Savior, conscious of a power new-born within them, the power of the Lord's resurrection. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." But is this truth less vivifying and precious to us? Has it lost anything Of its vitality to quicken, or its power to soothe? Oh, no! truth is eternal and immutable. Years impair not its strength, circumstances change not its character. The same truths which distilled as dew from the lips of Moses; which awoke the seraphic lyre of David; which winged the heaven-soaring spirit of Isaiah; which inspired the manly eloquence of Paul; which floated in visions of sublimity before the eye of John; and which in all ages have fed, animated, and sanctified the people of God—guiding their counsels, soothing their sorrows, and animating their hopes—still are vital and potent in the chequered experiences of the saints, hastening to swell the cloud of witnesses to their divinity and their might. Of such is the doctrine of Christ's resurrection. Oh, what consolation flows to the church of God from the truth of a living Savior—a Savior alive to know and to heal our sorrows—to inspire and sanctify our joys—to sympathize with and supply our need! Alive to every cloud that shades the mind, to every cross that chafes the spirit, to every grief that saddens the heart, to every evil that threatens our safety, or perils our happiness! What power, too, do the promises of the gospel derive from this truth! When Jesus speaks by these promises, we feel that there is life and spirit in his word, for it is the spoken word of a living Savior. And when he invites us to himself for rest, and bids us look to his cross for peace, and asks us to deposit our burdens at his feet, and drink the words that flow from his lips, we feel a living influence stealing over the soul, inspiriting and soothing as that of which the trembling Evangelist was conscious, when

the glorified Savior gently laid his right hand upon him, and said, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Is Jesus alive? Then let what else die, our life, with all its supports, and consolations, and hopes, is secure in him. "Because I live, you shall live also." A living spring is he. Seasons vary, circumstances change, feelings fluctuate, friendships cool, friends die, but Christ is ever the same. He is that "Tree of Life," whose boughs overhang either side of the river, and which yields its fruit every month. Travel to it when we may, we find it fruitful. It may be winter with us, it is always summer with the Tree. Cold and dreary may be the region where we have come, all chilled and desolate, to the spot where it stands: in an instant it is as though we had emerged into a southern climate—its balmy air, its spicy breezes, and its warm sunlight, encircling us in their soft robes. Oh, the blessedness of dealing with a risen, a living Redeemer! We take our needs to him they are instantly supplied. We take our sins to him—they are immediately pardoned. We take our griefs to him they are in a moment assuaged. "Every month," ay, and each moment of every month, finds this Tree of Life proffering its ample foliage for our shade, and yielding its rich fruit for our refreshment. Such are some of the blessings which flow from the resurrection of Christ. The identity of this great fact with the resurrection of the saints we reserve for the next chapter; closing the present with the fervent prayer that the Eternal Spirit may give us a heartfelt possession of its power, enabling us to exclaim, with the unwavering faith and undimmed hope of the holy patriarch—"I know that my redeemer lives!"

## **CHAPTER 12.**

### **"The Resurrection of the Christian"**

**"He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you." Romans 8:11.**

**"He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you." Romans 8:11**

**"And just as he raised Christ from the dead, he will give life to your mortal body by this same Spirit living within you." Romans 8:11**

Identical with, and consequent upon, the resurrection of the Savior, is the resurrection not less divine, and scarcely less glorious—of the saints. Seeing that our Lord entered the grave as a public person, sustaining a representative character, when, therefore, he broke from its thralldom, he rose, the "first-fruits of those who slept." The Head of the Church alive, the resurrection-life of the Church became a fact, at once certain and glorious. Now, if the gospel be a myth—how charming the fiction! If untrue—how blissful the lie! With what sunlight joyousness does it gladden all the present, and with what effulgent hope does it gild all the future! Robbing us of this, what does Infidelity offer as its substitute? It proposes to soften our ills, and to soothe our sorrows, by annihilating our faith, and extinguishing our hope! But we believe, and are sure that Christ was no impostor, that Christianity is no fiction, that the Gospel is no lie; and, confirmed in our faith in the resurrection of the Savior, "why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?" Having contemplated the "first-fruits," now waving before the golden altar in heaven, let us take a perspective view of the coming harvest—the quickening of our mortal bodies by Christ's Spirit that dwells in us.

"Your mortal bodies"—words which at once define our present existence as one of suffering, and humiliation. And such verily it is. In asserting this fact, let it not be supposed that we deny that there is much dignity and grandeur connected with our material frame. We are fearfully and wonderfully made; a piece of mechanism displaying in each part and combination of the whole, the infinite wisdom, and elaborate skill, and boundless benevolence of the Divine Framer. And yet, from the most pleasing survey of this wondrous creature, man, we are compelled to revert to the sad truth, that our present existence is one of deep humiliation and certain decay. The language of Scripture in depicting this condition—a condition well calculated to lay human pride in the dust—is strong and emphatic. The Apostle characterizes our material frame as "this vile body," literally, "the body of our humiliation." And in his sublime and triumphant argument on the resurrection, he employs terms equally as descriptive of our present State: "When this corruption shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality." Thus is our physical structure, which we adorn with so much care, and which others so extravagantly admire, described as a "vile body," as "corruption," as "mortal." Ah! has the fact with many, perhaps, my reader, with you, become so common-place as to have changed its character, from one of the most affecting and humbling, to one the existence and contemplation of which awakens in the mind no deep and serious reflection? Have you grown so

familiar with disease, and become so conversant with death—the inanimate clay, the shroud, the coffin, the hearse, the grave—those sad emblems of our mortality—as to feel sensible of no solemn emotions when the Holy Spirit brings the fact before the mind? Is it with, you a light matter to die? Ah! death is no trifle; and he will find it so who knows not Him who is the "Resurrection and the Life." But, display the stoic and act the philosopher as you may, give place to mirth, and hilarity, and thoughtlessness as you will—in all your vivacity, your pomp and power, you are mortal, and must die. "Dust you are, and unto dust shall you return." You shall "say to corruption, You are my father; and to the worm, You are my mother and my sister." To this humiliating end all are tending. And although some of our race move to the tomb in greater state and luxury than others, yet, "The grave is my house," is the affecting exclamation of all. There the rich and the poor meet together—Dives and Lazarus side by side. "There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." And yet how few feel the solemnity, and admit the force of this truth. How few pause to consider that this body which they now pamper with such studied luxuriance, and adorn with such refinement of taste, will before long need no clothing but the winding sheet, no house but the coffin, and no home but the grave! And that so changed will be the countenance, once lined with beauty and radiant with thought—and so decayed the body, once so graceful and athletic—that those who regarded it with the fondest love, and who worshiped it with the deepest devotion, will be the first to exclaim, "Bury my dead out of my sight." Oh, how dire the humiliation of our present existence! "The body is dead because of sin."

But there glows around the grave of the believer in Jesus the halo of a blessed hope. "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies." But for this animating and sustaining hope how starless and cheerless were his present existence. Strange as it may sound, that existence derives a character of peculiar sadness from the very circumstance of his Christianity. He is one to whom the Spirit has made known the inward plague. He is one whose frequent cry is, "O, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He is one who conflicts with principalities and powers. He is one who is often placed in the fiery furnace of affliction. There is a secret in the history of every believer known only to God and his own soul. Oh, then, what a rayless, desolate path through this valley of tears were his, but for the hope of the resurrection—that hope which, like the stars of evening, shines the sweetest and the brightest when life seems the gloomiest and the darkest. No pomp or circumstance may attend him to the tomb, no marble monument may rear its chiseled form to record his virtues, to

perpetuate his name, or mark the spot where his ashes repose. Those ashes the Ocean's cave may contain; his only tombstone the crested billows; his only requiem, chanted to the wild sea-bird, the solemn music of the waves as they dash and die upon the shore: but he sleeps in Jesus, and slumbering thus, his flesh rests in hope of a glorious resurrection and a blissful immortality. Oh, what a new and impressive character does Christianity give to the entire scene of the believer's departure out of this world to go unto the Father! To the eye of sense the outer door of the tomb appears hideous and forbidding. The deadly nightshade, and the overshadowing ivy, entwine darkly and thickly over its dismal arch; while the trail of the worm and the time-gathered mold upon its bars, deepen the air of its repulsiveness. But viewed by faith, how changed that tomb! As seen by its piercing eye, it is all radiant around, and all refulgent within. The Lamb of God has been there, touching and gilding all with life and glory. There rears the tree of life—there clusters the living vine—there flow the heavenly waters—there float the celestial breezes—there are redolent all the sweets of the upper paradise. And when the inner door opens upon heaven, what a scene of grandeur bursts upon the spirit's view! Glory, streaming from above, bathes it in its liquid beams, and lights its pathway to the skies. This is the tomb of a believer in Jesus. No; it is no longer a tomb—it is a triumphal arch, all radiant and garlanded, through which the spiritual conqueror, laden with the spoils of his last victory, passes, amid the acclaim of angels and the welcomings of sister spirits, to his crown and his rest.

But what will be the order of the believer's resurrection? Will it be anterior to, or contemporaneous with, the general resurrection of the dead? This is a question of the tenderest, holiest, interest. We believe that in this, as in each former part of his history, God will maintain the same difference he has ever put between the righteous and the wicked. The resurrection of the just is distinctly placed in Scripture in the foreground of the great and solemn scene. It is evidently made to take the precedence by a thousand years of the resurrection of the unjust. "The dead in Christ shall rise first." "Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection." Speaking of the ungodly, the Psalmist thus refers to the difference between them and the just at the resurrection: "Like sheep they are laid in the grave death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning." Oh, what a scene of joy will that be when, emerging from the gloom and impurity of the grave, the dead in Christ shall find themselves bathing in the golden beams, and inhaling the heavenly odor, of the morning of the "first resurrection." No demon of darkness shall shade its glory with his raven wing. No wail of

despair shall blend with its entrancing music; it will be as when this magnificent creation first burst into being, and all the morning stars sang together for joy. And as the Savior cleaves the air, descending in the clouds of heaven, and nearing the earth he had touched and consecrated with his blood, a shout will be heard, so melodious, that all the heavenly minstrelsy will suspend their harpings to listen in breathless silence to its strains—"Lo, this is our God: we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

"By his Spirit that dwells in us." Such is the *agency* by which the resurrection of the saints will be effected. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit secures the reanimation of our slumbering dust, and supplies the power by which it will be accomplished. The resurrection of the redeemed body will be the resurrection of an entombed, not a lost—the reconstruction of a dilapidated, not a destroyed temple of the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit dwelling in us now, will dwell in us then. Quickening with his Divine energy our mortal body, he will remodel, reanimate, and re-enter his former abode, replenishing it with his glory through eternity. In this marvellous work of resuscitation each Person of the ever blessed Trinity will be engaged. The Father will welcome home, as from a long exile, his adopted family; the Son will openly espouse his ransomed bride; and the Spirit will rebuild and re-occupy his sacred temple. Then will the Prophet's prediction receive its fullest and sweetest accomplishment—"The Lord God in the midst of you is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over you with joy; he will rest in his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."

## **CHAPTER 13.**

### **"The Believer's Obligation to Mortify Sin"**

"Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Romans 8:12-13

"Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live," Romans 8:12-13

**"So, dear Christian friends, you have no obligation whatsoever to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you keep on following it, you will perish. But if through the power of the Holy Spirit you turn from it and its evil deeds, you will live." Romans 8:12-13**

After the lucid statement which the Apostle had in earlier verses made of the doctrine of *justification*, it was but natural and proper that he should proceed to illustrate the close affinity to its cognate truth—*sanctification*. So far from the doctrine of completeness in Christ engendering a spirit of laxity in the believer, it is his aim to show that it was the parent of all true holiness; that instead of weakening the motive of sanctification, it rather strengthens it, binding those who are justified by the most solemn obligation to an entire mortification of all sin. "Therefore,"—is the conclusion to which his reasoning brings him, "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh." There are three distinct, yet consecutive points of truth in this passage—The solemn obligation of the children of God—The duty to which that obligation binds them—and The Divine agency by which that duty is discharged.

#### **THE SOLEMN OBLIGATION OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD—**

"We are debtors." That around a subject so momentous as this no obscurity might gather, tending to misguide the judgment, the Apostle most distinctly and emphatically affirms that the flesh has no valid claim whatever upon the believer; and that, consequently, he is under no obligation to yield compliance with its feigned exactions. We are debtors; but the flesh is not our creditor. What are its demands, that it is incumbent upon us to comply? Do we owe anything to sin, the parent of all our woe? Nothing. To Satan—who plotted our temptation and accomplished our downfall? Nothing. To the world—ensnaring, deceitful, and ruinous? Nothing. No; to these, the auxiliaries and allies of the flesh, we owe nothing but the deepest hatred, and the most determined opposition.

And yet the saints of God are "debtors." To whom? What debtors are they to the Father, for his electing love, for the covenant of grace, for his unspeakable gift, for having blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus! We but imperfectly estimate the debt of love, gratitude, and service which we owe to him whose mind the Eternal Son came to reveal, whose will he came to do, and whose heart he came to unveil. It was the Father who sent the Son. With

him originated the wondrous expedient of our redemption. He it was who laid all our sins on Jesus. It was his sword of justice that smote the Shepherd, while his hand of love and protection was laid upon the little ones. We have too much supposed that the atonement of Jesus was intended to inspire the mercy, rather than to propitiate the justice of God; to awaken in his heart a love that did not previously exist. Thus we have overlooked the source from where originated our salvation, and have lost sight of the truth, that the mediation of Jesus was not the *cause*, but rather the *effect* of God's love to man. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son to be a propitiation for our sins." Oh for the Spirit to understand, and for grace to feel, and for love to exemplify, our deep obligation to God for the everlasting love that gave his Son!

Equal debtors are we to the Son. He was the active agent in our redemption. He it was who undertook and accomplished all that our salvation required. He left no path untrodden, no portion of the curse unborne, no sin unatoned, no part of the law uncanceled—nothing for us in the matter of our salvation to do, but simply to believe, and be saved. Oh, to raise the eye to him—strong in faith, beaming with love, moist with contrition—and exclaim, "You have borne my sin, endured my curse, extinguished my hell, secured my heaven. Your spirit was wounded for me; your heart bled for me; your body was bruised for me; for me your soul was stricken for me, a sinner, the chief of sinners. I am your debtor—a debtor to your dying love, to your eternal, discriminating mercy. Surely, an eternity of love, of service, and of praise, can never repay you what I owe you, blessed Jesus." Oh, how deep the obligation we are under to Christ!

And not less indebted are we to the Holy Spirit. What do we not owe him of love and obedience, who awoke the first thrill of life in our soul; who showed to us our guilt, and sealed to us our pardon? What do we not owe him for leading us to Christ; for dwelling in our hearts; for his healing, sanctifying, comforting, and restoring grace; for his influence which no ingratitude has quenched; for his patience which no backsliding has exhausted; for his love which no sin has annihilated? Yes, we are the Spirit's lasting debtors. We owe him the intellect he has renewed, the heart he has sanctified, the body he inhabits—every breath of life he has inspired, and every pulse of love he has awakened. Thus are all real believers debtors to the Triune God. Debtors to the Father's everlasting love, to the Son's redeeming grace, and to the Spirit's quickening mercy. To the flesh we owe nothing but uncompromising hatred; to Jehovah we owe undivided and supreme affection.

Holiness, or the mortification of sin, is the obligation to which this indebtedness binds us. In a previous chapter of this work we explained the import of the phrase, "living after the flesh." We now consider its opposite condition, "mortifying the deeds of the body." It is marvellous how strangely the subject of mortification of sin in the godly has been mystified and misunderstood. Some have resolved it into a mere maceration or mortification of the body. Others have restricted it to the mere excision of outward sins. While yet others have represented it as consisting in the destruction of sin altogether in the believer. But none of these views convey any correct idea of the mortification spoken of in the passage under consideration. . What, then, is it to "mortify the deeds of the body?" True mortification has its foundation in the life of God in the soul. A spiritual, yes, a most spiritual work, it can only spring from a most spiritual principle. It is not a plant indigenous to our fallen nature. It cannot be in the principle of sin to mortify itself. Nature possesses neither the inclination, nor the power, by which so holy an achievement can be accomplished. A dead faith, a blind zeal, a superstitious devotion, may prompt severe austerities; but to lay the axe close to the root of indwelling evil, to marshal the forces against the principle of sin in the heart—thus besieging and carrying the very citadel itself; to keep the body under, and bring it into subjection, by a daily and a deadly conflict with its innate and desperately depraved propensities—is a work transcending the utmost reach of the most severe external austerities. It consists, too, in an annulling of the covenant with sin: "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness"—enter into no truce, make no agreement, form no union—"but rather reprove them." "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" The resources of sin must be cut off—"Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." Whatever tends to, and terminates in, the sinful gratification of the flesh, is to be relinquished, as frustrating the great aim of the Christian in the mortification of the deeds of the body. Mortification is aptly set forth as a *crucifixion*: "Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh." Death by the cross is certain, yet lingering. Our blessed Lord was suspended upon the tree from nine in the morning until three in the afternoon. It was a slow, lingering torture, yet terminating in his giving up the spirit. Similar to this is the death of sin in the believer. It is progressive and protracted, yet certain in the issue. Nail after nail must pierce our corruptions, until the entire body of sin, each member thus transfixed, is crucified and slain.

Let us now contemplate the two-fold agency by which the work of

mortification is accomplished.

**"If you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live."  
"If YOU." The believer is not a cipher in this work. It is a matter in which he must necessarily possess a deep and personal interest. How many and precious are the considerations that bind him to the duty! His usefulness, his happiness, his sunny hope of heaven, are included in it. The work of the Spirit is not, and never was designed to be, a substitute for the personal work of the believer. His influence, indispensable and sovereign though it is, does not release from human and individual responsibility. "Work out your own salvation," "Keep yourselves in the love of God," "Building up yourselves," are exhortations which emphatically and distinctly recognize the obligation of personal effort and human responsibility. The reasoning which bids me defer the work of battling with my heart's corruptions, of mortifying the deeds of the body, until the Spirit performs his part, argues an unhealthy Christianity, and betrays a kind of truce with sin, which must on no account for a moment be entertained. As under the law, the father was compelled to hurl the first missile at the profane child, so under the gospel—a milder and more beneficent economy though it be—the believer is to cast the first stone at his corruptions; he is to take the initiative in the great work of mortifying and slaying the cherished sin. "If you do mortify." Let us, then, be cautious of merging human responsibility in Divine influence; of exalting the one at the expense of the other; of cloaking the spirit of slothfulness and indolence beneath an apparently jealous regard for the honor of the Holy Spirit. How narrow is the way of truth! How many diverging paths there are, at each turning of which Satan stands, clothed as an angel of light, quoting Scripture with all the aptness and eloquence of an apostle! But God will never release us from the obligation of "striving against sin." "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection," was Paul's noble declaration. Is no self-effort to be made to escape the gulf of habitual intoxication, by dashing the ensnaring beverage from the lips? Is no self-effort to be made to break away from the thralldom of a companionship, the influence of which is fast hurrying us to ruin and despair? Is no self-effort to be made to dethrone an unlawful habit, to resist a powerful temptation, to dissolve the spell that binds us to a dangerous enchantment, to unwind the chain that makes us the vassal and the slave of a wrong and imperious inclination? Oh, surely, God deals not with us as we deal with a piece of a machine—but as reasonable, moral, and accountable beings. "I drew you with the bands of a man." Mortification, therefore, is a work to which the believer must address himself, and that with prayerful and resolute earnestness.**

And yet we must acknowledge that it infinitely transcends the mightiest puttings forth of creative power. "If you through the Spirit do mortify." This he does by making us more sensible of the existence of indwelling sin, by deepening our aspirations after holiness—by shedding abroad the love of God in the heart. But above all, the Spirit mortifies sin in the believer by unfoldings of the Lord Jesus. Leading us to the cross, he would show us that as Christ died for sin, so we must die to sin—and by the selfsame instrument too. One real, believing sight of the cross of Jesus!—oh, what a crucifying power has it! Paul, standing beneath its awful shadow, and gazing upon its Divine victim, exclaimed, "God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Get near the Savior's cross, if you would accomplish anything in this great and necessary work of mortification. The Spirit effects it, but through the instrumentality of the Atonement. There must be a personal contact with Jesus. This only is it that draws forth his grace. When the poor woman, in the Gospel, touched the Savior, we are told that multitudes thronged him. And yet, in all that crowd that pressed upon his steps, one only extracted the healing virtue. Thus do multitudes follow Christ externally; they attend his courts, and approach his ordinances, and speak well of his name, who know nothing by faith of personal transaction with the Lord. They crowd his path, and strew their branches in his way, and chant their Hosannahs; but of how few can Christ say, "Somebody has touched me!" Oh, let us have more personal dealing with the Lord Jesus. He delights in this. It pleases, it glorifies him. He bids us come and disclose every personal feeling, and make known every need, and unveil every grief, and confide to his bosom each secret of our own. He loves us to bathe in his blood—to enfold ourselves in his righteousness—to draw from his grace—and to cast ourselves upon his boundless sympathy. The crowd cannot veil us from his eye. He sees the poor and contrite; he observes the trembling and the lowly; he meets the uplifted glance; he feels the thrill of the trembling, hesitating, yet believing touch. "Somebody has touched me." Who? Is it you, my reader?

Thus does the Spirit mortify sin in the believer. "But how may I know," is the anxious inquiry of many, "that sin is being mortified in me?" We reply—by a weakening of its power. When Christ subdues our iniquities, he does not eradicate them, but weakens the strength of their root. The principle of sin remains, but it is impaired. See it in the case of Peter. Before he fell, his besetting sin was self-confidence: "Though all should deny you, yet will I not." Behold him after his recovery—taking the low place at the feet of Jesus, and

at the feet of the disciples too, meekly saying, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." No more self-vaunting, no more self-confidence: his sin was mortified through the Spirit, and he became as another man. Thus often the very outbreak of our sins may become the occasion of their deeper discovery, and their more thorough subjection. Nor let us overlook the power of the *truth* by the instrumentality of which the Spirit mortifies sin in us: "Sanctify them through your truth." The truth as it is in Jesus, revealed more clearly to the mind, and impressed more deeply on the heart, transforms the soul into its own Divine and holy nature. Our spiritual and experimental acquaintance, therefore, with the truth—with Him who is Essential Truth—will be the measure of the Spirit's mortification of sin in our hearts. Is the Lord Jesus becoming increasingly precious to your soul? Are you growing in poverty of spirit, in a deeper sense of your vileness, and weakness, and unworthiness? Is pride more abased, and self more crucified, and God's glory more simply sought? Does the heart more quickly shrink from sin, and is the conscience more sensitive to the touch of guilt, and do confession and cleansing become a more frequent habit? Are you growing in more love to all the saints—to those who, though they adopt not your entire creed, yet love and serve your Lord and Master? If so, then you may be assured the Spirit is mortifying sin in you. But oh, look from everything to Christ. Look not within for sanctification; look for it from Christ. He is as much our "sanctification," as he is our "righteousness." Your evidences, your comfort, your hope, do not spring from your fruitfulness, your mortification, or anything within you; but solely and entirely from the Lord Jesus Christ. "Looking unto Jesus" by faith, is like removing the covering and opening the windows of a conservatory, to admit the sun, beneath whose light and warmth the flowers and fruits expand and mature. Withdraw the veil that conceals the Sun of Righteousness, and let him shine in upon your soul, and the mortification of all sin will follow, and the fruits of all holiness will abound.

## **CHAPTER 14.**

### **"The Guidance of the Spirit"**

**"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."  
Romans 8:14**

**"Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." Romans  
8:14**

**"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God." Romans 8:14**

**We are here presented with another and a beautiful view of the Spirit as the *Leader* of his people. Man is a traveler to the eternal world. Left to self-guidance, as a fallen creature, he possesses vast and uncontrollable powers of self-destruction. What is he without a guide in the wilderness? what is he without a pilot on the ocean? Some recognize no other spirit—invoke no other spirit—and are guided by no other spirit, than the spirit of the world. And what is the spirit of the world but the all-pervading and controlling power of the spirit of darkness, who is emphatically denominated the "god of this world?" Others are more manifestly guided by their own spirit, their unsanctified, unsubdued spirit, and thus, "like a city that is broken and without walls," they are exposed to the perpetual invasion of every prowling evil. How evident is it, then, that threading his way to eternity along a path of difficulty and peril, man needs a Divine guide!**

**Such is the Guide of the Saints. They are "led by the Spirit." It is the office of Jehovah the Spirit in the covenant of redemption, after he has called a people out of the world, to place himself at their head, and undertake their future guidance. He knows the path to heaven. With all its intricacies and dangers he is acquainted—with the sunken rock, and the treacherous quicksand, and the concealed pit, and the subtle snare, he is familiar. He knows, too, the individual and ordained path of each celestial traveler. All that God has appointed in the everlasting covenant—all the windings, and intricacy, and straitness of the way he knows. All the future of our history is infinitely more vivid and transparent to his mind than is the past, already trodden, to our eye. It is utterly impossible, then, that he should mislead. And what is equally as essential to him as a guide, he knows his own work in the soul. All its light and shade, its depressions and its revivings, its assaults and victories, are vivid to his eye. Dwelling in that heart—his sacred temple—his chosen abode—he reads his own writing inscribed there; understands the meaning of every groan, interprets the language of every sigh, and marks the struggling of every holy desire; he knows where wisely to supply a check, or gently to administer a rebuke, or tenderly to whisper a promise, or sympathetically to soothe a sorrow, or effectually to aid an incipient resolve, or strengthen a wavering purpose, or confirm a fluctuating hope. But, in less general terms—what is it to be led by the Spirit?**

**The *existence of spiritual life* in those he leads is an essential point assumed.**

He does not undertake to lead a spiritual corpse, a soul dead in sins. Many are *moved* by the Spirit, who are not *led* by the Spirit. Was not Saul, the king of Israel, a solemn instance of this? And when it is said, "the Spirit of God departed from him," we see how, in an *ordinary* way, the Spirit may strive with a man's natural conscience, and powerfully work upon his feelings through the word, and even employ him as an agent in the accomplishment of his will, and yet never lead him one step effectually and savingly to Christ, and to heaven. There is, as in Ezekiel's vision of the bones, "a voice, and behold a shaking, and the bones come together, bone to his bone, but there is no breath in them." But there is spiritual life in those whom the Spirit leads. They thus become in a sense voluntary in the movement. They are not forced; it is not by compulsion they follow; they are led—persuasively, gently, willingly led. The leading of the Spirit, then, is his acting upon his own life in the soul.

It supposes, too, *entire inability to lead themselves* in those who are led by the Spirit: "I will lead the blind by a way they know not." And such are we. Unable to discern a single step before us, and incapable of taking that step even when discerned, we need the guidance of the Holy Spirit. What can we see of truth—what of providence—what of God's mind and will, of ourselves? Absolutely nothing. Oh, what unfoldings of ignorance, what exhibitions of weakness, have marked some of the wisest and mightiest of God's saints, when left to self-teaching and to self-guidance! Thus there is a strong and absolute necessity that wisdom, and strength, and grace, infinitely transcending our own, should go before us in our homeward journey.

The first step the Spirit takes in this great work is, *to lead us away from ourselves*—from all reliance on our Own righteousness, and from all dependence upon our native strength. But let us not suppose that this *divorce* from the *principle of self* entirely takes place when we are "married to another, even to Christ." It is the work of a life. Alas! Christ has at best but a portion of our affections. Our heart is divided. It is true there are moments—bright and blissful—when we sincerely and ardently desire the full, unreserved surrender. But the ensnaring power of some rival object soon discovers to us how partial and imperfect that surrender has been. This severing from ourselves from all our idols—is a perpetual, unceasing work of the Spirit. And who but this Divine Spirit could so lead us away from self, in all its forms, as to constrain us to trample all our own glory in the dust, and acknowledge with Paul that we are "less than the least of all saints?" But more than this. He leads from an opposite extreme of self—from a *despairing*

*view of our personal sinfulness.* How often, when the eye has been intently bent within, gazing as it were upon the gloom and confusion of a moral chaos, the Spirit has gently and graciously led us from ourselves to another object, the sight of which has at once raised us from the region of despair! How many walk in painful and humiliating bondage from not having thus been sufficiently led out of themselves! Always contemplating their imperfect repentance, or their weak faith, or their little fruitfulness, they seem ever to be moving in a circle, and to know nothing of what it is to walk in a large place. Thus from *sinful self*, as from *righteous self*, the Spirit of God leads us.

To what does he lead? He leads us to Christ. To whom else would we, in our deep necessity, wish to be led? Now that we know something experimentally of Jesus, to whom would we go but to him? Having severed us in some degree from ourselves, he would bring us into a closer realization of our union with the Savior. "He shall glorify me, for he shall take of mine and show it unto you." And this promise is fulfilled when, in all our need, he leads us to Christ. Are we guilty?—the Spirit leads us to the blood of Jesus. Are we weary?—the Spirit leads us to abide in Jesus. Are we sorrowful?—the Spirit leads us to the sympathy of Jesus. Are we tempted?—the Spirit leads us to the protection of Jesus. Are we sad and desolate?—the Spirit leads us to the tender love of Jesus. Are we poor, empty, and helpless?—the Spirit leads us to the fullness of Jesus. And still it is to the Savior he conducts us. The Holy Spirit is our Comforter, but the holy Jesus is our comfort. And to Jesus—to his person, to his offices, and to his work, in life and in death, the Divine Guide ever leads us.

He leads us to truth. The promise of the Savior is, "He shall guide you into all truth." *When professing Christians have been led into error, nothing is more certain than that they have not been led by the Spirit.* Though many claim him as their Teacher, he disowns them as his disciples. As the "Spirit of truth" he can reveal nothing but truth; can teach nothing but truth; can lead to nothing but truth. All who have received the truth—who are walking in the truth—and who are growing in the truth—are brought under the guidance of the Spirit of truth. Tossed from opinion to opinion, agitated and perplexed by the conflicting views of men and the antagonist creeds of churches, are you anxiously inquiring, "What is truth?"—Commit yourself to the guidance of the Spirit. Cast yourself in faith upon the promise, and plead it at the feet of your Divine Teacher—"He shall guide you into all truth." He can harmonize apparent contradictions, he can reconcile alleged discrepancies, he can clear away overshadowing mists, and place each essential doctrine, and each

enjoined precept, and each divine institution before your mind, clear, transparent, and effulgent as a noontide sunbeam. Oh, betake yourself, in your anxious, perilous search for the truth, to the simple guidance of the Spirit, and what the Greek philosopher, in transport at his discovery, shouted, you, with infinitely greater joy of heart and emphasis of meaning, shall echo, "I have found it! I have found it!"

He leads to all holiness. As the "Spirit of holiness," it is his aim to deepen the impress of the restored image of God in the soul, to increase our happiness by making us more holy, and to advance our holiness by making us more like God. Thus he leads to nothing but what is sanctifying. All the unfoldings he makes of Christ, all the views he unveils of God, all the deeper insight to truth which he imparts, all the rebukes he faithfully yet gently whispers, all the chambers of imagery in our hearts which he opens, and all the joy which he inspires, have this for their single object—the perfection of us in holiness. Christ is the source, the truth is the instrument, and the Spirit is the agent of our sanctification.

He leads to all comfort. Hence he is emphatically denominated, "the Comforter." There is no sorrow of the believing heart of which he is ignorant, to which he is indifferent, or which his sympathy does not embrace, and his power cannot alleviate. The church in which he dwells, and whose journeyings he guides, is a tried church. Chosen in the furnace of affliction, allied to a suffering Head, its course on earth is traced by tears, and often by blood. Deeply it needs a Comforter. And who can compute the individual sorrows which may crowd the path of a single traveler to his sorrowless home? What a world of trial, and how varied, may be comprised within the history of a single saint! But if sorrows abound, consolation much more abounds, since the Comforter of the Church is the Holy Spirit. What a mighty provision, how infinite the largess, the God of all consolation has made in the covenant of grace for the sorrows of his people, in the appointment of the Third Person of the blessed Trinity to this office! What an importance it attaches to, and with what dignity it invests, and with what sanctity it hallows our every sorrow! If our heavenly Father sees proper in his unerring wisdom and goodness to send affliction, who would not welcome the message as a sacred and precious thing, thus to be soothed and sanctified? Yes, the Spirit leads the sorrowful to all comfort. He comforts by applying the promises—by leading to Christ—by bending the will in deep submission to God—and by unveiling to faith's far-seeing eye the glories of a sorrowless, tearless, sinless world. And oh, who can portray his exquisite character as a Comforter? With what promptness and

tenderness he applies himself to the soothing of each grief—how patiently he instructs the ignorant—how gently he leads the burdened—how skillfully he heals the wounded—how timely he meets the necessitous—how soothingly he speaks to the mourner! When our heart is overwhelmed within us, through the depth and foam of the angry waters, he leads us to the Rock that is higher than we.

He leads to glory. There he matures the kingdom, and perfects the building, and completes the temple he commenced and occupied on earth. No power shall oppose, no difficulty shall obstruct, no contingency shall thwart the consummation of this his glorious purpose and design. Every, soul graced by his presence, every heart touched by his love, every body sanctified as his temple, he will lead to heaven. Of that heaven he is the pledge and the earnest. *While Jesus is in heaven, preparing a place for his people, the Spirit is on earth, preparing his people for that place.* The one is maturing glory for the Church, the other is maturing the Church for glory.

"They are the sons of God." Such are they who are led by the Spirit. All who are conscious of this Divine guidance have an indubitable evidence of their Divine sonship. It is a dignified and holy relationship. It implies an assimilation of nature with God. The Apostle speaks of some whom he denominates the "children of the devil," because of their Satanic nature. The regenerate are denominates the "sons of God," because they are "partakers of the Divine nature." Thus does one of the beatitudes express it "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children (Greek, sons) of God," because their nature assimilates with him who is the "God of peace." Again: "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, pray for those who despitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the children (sons) of God;"—like Him who makes his sun to shine upon the evil and the good. Now, are we sensible that in any measure we are under the guidance of the Spirit? Has he led us from ourselves to Christ through Christ to God? Do we hear his "still small voice?" Do we feel his gentle constraints, his gracious drawings, his soothing love? Then are we the sons of God. " For as many as are led by the Spirit, they are the sons of God."

In conclusion, receive, my beloved reader, a word of tender caution. Beware of being guided by any other than by the Spirit of God. The temptation is strong, and the tendency to yield to it equally so, of being biased in forming our theological views, and in modeling our Christian practice, by the profound research, the distinguished talents, the exalted piety, and admired

example of men. But this must not be. It is inconsistent with the honor that belongs, and with the love that we owe to the Spirit. A human must necessarily be a fallible guide; against the influence, of whose doctrinal error, and practical mistakes, no extent of learning, or depth of spirituality, or eminence of position on their part, can ensure us. We are only safe, as we constantly and strictly follow our Divine and heavenly guide. Blessed and Eternal

Spirit! To your teaching would I bow my mind. To your love would I yield my heart. To your consolation would I carry my sorrows. To your government would I resign my entire soul. "You shall guide me by your counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory."

## **CHAPTER 15.**

### **"The Spirit of Adoption"**

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Romans 8:15

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." Romans 8:15

So you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God's very own children, adopted into his family—calling him "Father, dear Father." Romans 8:15

It is most distinctly affirmed in this passage, that the children of God are emancipated from the spirit of bondage—the present and mournful condition of all the unregenerate. The question here arises, what is the spirit of bondage of which the Apostle speaks? It exhibits itself in various forms, yet, essentially, it is the same spirit. *The world, for example, holds in cruel bondage all its devotees. It enslaves the intellect by its opinions, the heart by its pleasures, the imagination by its promises, the soul by its religion—leading it a willing captive, a victim garlanded for the sacrifice.* They are described as "walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience."

But it is the moral law—the spirit of bondage which genders fear—to which the passage particularly refers. Its commands are exceedingly broad, and the obedience upon which it insists unqualifiedly perfect; and yet, with all the breadth of the precept, and the rigidness of the requirement, it offers no helping hand. It shows a man his sin, but not his pardon. It teaches him his weakness, but tells him not where his great strength lies. It thunders in his ear his misery and condemnation, but whispers not a word of mercy and of hope. Emancipated, as the justified believer really is, from the condemning power of this law, yet, alas! how much of its bondage spirit does he still retain! How few of the sons of God realize the possession and largeness of their birthright! How few rise to the dimity and the privilege of their adoption! How few see their completeness in Christ Jesus, and read the sentence of their pardon written in the heart's blood of Immanuel! How few walk in a large place, and by the sunny joyousness and lofty aspirations of their spirit, evidence that they have "not received the spirit of bondage again to fear!"

"But you have received the Spirit of adoption." The Spirit of adoption is the same as the Spirit of God. There are two essential features which identify him as such. The first is, he imparts the nature of the Father to all the children of the family. In this there is a wide difference between a human and a Divine adoption. Man can only confer his name and his inheritance upon the child he adopts. But in the adoption of God, to the name and inheritance of God is added the Divine *nature* imparted in regeneration; so that, in the words of our Lord, we become manifestly the "children of our Father who is in heaven." The second feature is—having begotten the nature of the Father, he then breathes *the spirit of the child* into the heart. He inspires a filial love. The love which glows in the believer's heart is the affection of a child to its parent. It is not a servile bondage, but a filial and free spirit. Oh, sweet and holy emotion! How tender and confiding, how clinging and childlike is it! Such ought to be our love to God. He is our Father—we are his children. Why should not our love to him be marked by more of the exquisite tenderness, and the unquestioning confidence, and the calm repose of a child reclining upon a parent's breast? A *childlike fear of God* is another inspiration of the Spirit of adoption. Love and fear are twin graces in the Christian character. The Spirit of God is the Author of both; and both dwell together and co-operate in the same renewed heart. It is not the dread of the servant, but the holy trembling of the child, of which we speak. It is a filial, loving, reverential fear. A *childlike trust* in God also springs from the Spirit of adoption. The trust of a child is implicit, affectionate, and unquestioning. Upon whose counsel may he so safely rely, in whose affection may he so fully confide, upon whose fidelity may

he so confidently trust, as a parent's? God is your Father, O child of a divine adoption, of a heavenly birth! Let your trust in him be the result of the relationship you sustain. It admits you to the closest intimacy, and invites you to the most perfect confidence. You have not a need, nor an anxiety, nor a grief which is not all his own. His adoption of your person—an act of his spontaneous and most free grace—pledged him to transfer all your individual interests to himself. To these we must add a *filial obedience*: "If you love me, keep my commandments." Obedience, whether to the Savior's precept, or to the Father's law, is the test of love; and love is the spring of obedience. "All that the Lord God has spoken to us will we do," is the language of that heart where the Spirit of adoption dwells. Such are some of the features of adoption.

"Whereby we cry, Abba, Father." The Apostle employs in the original two different languages. It may not be improper to infer, that in using both the Syriac and the Greek form—the one being familiar to the Jew, and the other to the Gentile—he would denote that both the Christian Jew and the believing Gentile were children of one family, and were alike privileged to approach God as a Father. Christ, our peace, has broken down the middle wall of partition that was between them; and now, at the same mercy-seat, the Christian Jew and the believing Gentile, both one in Christ Jesus, meet, as rays of light converge and blend in one common center—at the feet of their reconciled Father. The expressions, too, set forth the peculiarity and intensity of the affection. Literally, "Abba, Father," signifies "My Father." No bond-servant was permitted thus to address the master of the family; it was a privilege peculiar and sacred to the child. And when our blessed Lord would teach his disciples to pray, he led them to the mercy-seat, and sealed these precious words upon their lips—"Our Father, who is in heaven." And after his resurrection, with increased emphasis and intensity did he give utterance to the same truth. Previously to his death his words were, "go to *the* Father." But when he came back from the grave, every truth he had before enunciated seemed quickened as with new life. How tender and touching were his words—"I ascend unto my Father, and to *your* Father; to my God, and to *your* God." No longer a bond-slave, but a son, oh, claim the dignity and privilege of your birthright! Approach God as your Father.

"Abba, Father!" How tender the relation! how intense the affection! what power it imparts to prayer! What may you not ask, and what can God refuse, with "Abba, Father" breathing in lowliness and love from your lips? Remember, it is an inalienable, unchangeable relation. Never, in any instance, or under any circumstance the most aggravated, does God forget it. He is as

much our Father when he chastises, as when he approves; as much so when he frowns, as when he smiles; as much so when he brims the cup of adversity, as when he bids us drink the cup of salvation. Behold the touching display of it in his gracious restorings: "But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him." In all his wanderings, that father's love had never lost sight of his wayward child. It tracked him along all his windings, followed him to the very swine-trough, hovered around him even then, and waited and welcomed his return. We may doubt, and debase, and deny our divine relationship, yet God will never disown us as his children, nor disinherit us as his heirs. We may cease to act as a child, he will never cease to love as a Father. To him, then, as to a Father at all times repair. "Have faith in God." Confide in his heart to love you; in his counsel to guide you; and in his power to sustain you. Cast from you the fetters that enthrall, and pray to be upheld by his free Spirit. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

## **CHAPTER 16.**

### **"The Spirit Testifying to the Believer's Adoption"**

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Romans 8:16

"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."  
Romans 8:16

"For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God's children." Romans 8:16

Having affirmed the Divine relationship of the believer, the Apostle now proceeds to adduce the divine evidence of a truth so great. He assumes that the actual existence of the believer's sonship, may, to his own soul, at times be a matter of painful uncertainty. This leads him to unfold the agency of the Spirit in authenticating the fact, thus at once neutralizing in the mind all doubt, and allaying all fear. "The Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

With regard to the first point; it is not strange that the fact of his adoption should meet with much misgiving in the Christian's mind, seeing that it is a

truth so spiritual, flows from a source so concealed, and has its seat in the profound recesses of the soul. The very stupendousness of the relationship staggers our belief. To be fully assured of our divine adoption demands other than the testimony either of our own feelings, or the opinion of men. Our feelings sometimes excited and visionary—may mislead; the opinion of others—often fond and partial—may deceive us. The grand, the Divine, and only safe testimony is, "the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit." There exists a strong combination of evil tending to shake the Christian's confidence in the belief of his sonship. *Satan* is ever on the watch to insinuate the doubt. He tried the experiment with our Lord. "If you are the Son of God." In no instance would it appear that he actually denied the truth of Christ's divine relationship; the utmost that his temerity permitted was the suggestion to the mind of a doubt, leaving it there to its own working. Our blessed Lord thus assailed, it is no marvel that his disciples should be exposed to a like assault. The *world*, too, presumes to call it in question. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew him not." Ignorant of the Divine Original, how can it recognize the divine lineaments in the faint and imperfect copy? It has no vocabulary by which it can decipher the "new name written on the white stone." The sons of God are in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, illumining it with their light, and preserving it by their grace, yet disguised from its knowledge, and hidden from its view. But the strongest doubts touching the validity of his adoption are those gendered in the believer's own mind. Oh, there is much there to generate and foster the painful misgiving. We have said that the very greatness of the favor, the stupendousness of the relationship, startles the mind, and staggers our faith. "What! to be a child of God! God my Father! Can I be the subject of a change so great, of a relationship so exalted? Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you should exalt me to be a king's son? Is this the manner of men, O Lord God?" And, then, there crowd upon the believer's mind thoughts of his own sinfulness, and unworthiness of so distinguished a blessing. "Can it be? With such depravity of heart, such carnality of mind, such rebellion of will, such a propensity to evil each moment, and in everything such backslidings and flaws, does there yet exist within me a nature that links me with the Divine? It seems impossible!" And when to all this are added the varied dispensations of his Heavenly Father, often wearing a rough garb, assuming a somber aspect, threatening, and crushing; oh, it is no marvel that, staggered by a discipline so severe, the fact of God's love to him, and of his close and tender relation to God, should sometimes be a matter of painful doubt. That thus he should reason—"If his child, reposing

in his heart, and sealed upon his arm, why is it thus? Would he not have spared me this heavy stroke? Would not this cup of suffering have passed my lips? Would he have asked me to slay my Isaac, to resign my Benjamin? All these things are against me." And thus are the children of God constantly tempted to question the fact of their adoption.

But the Lord has graciously and amply provided for this painful part of Christian experience in the Witness of the Spirit. The perfect competence of the Spirit is assumed. Who can reasonably question it? Is verity essential to a witness? Then is he most competent, for he is the "Spirit of truth." Essentially Divine, his testimony is to be received as of one whose truthfulness cannot be impeached. If he witnesses to us that we are born from above, and belong to the one family, then we may safely credit his testimony, and receive the comfort it imparts. Is it essential that he should know the fact whereof he affirms? Who so competent to authenticate the work of the Spirit in the heart as the Spirit himself? We, then, may safely confide in the truthful and intelligent testimony which the Spirit of God bears to our being the sons of God.

As to the great truth thus witnessed to by the Spirit, we are not to suppose that the testimony is intended to make the fact itself more sure; but simply to confirm our own minds in the comfortable assurance of it. Our actual adoption cannot be more certain than it is. It is secured to us by the predestinating love of God, and the everlasting covenant of grace; is confirmed by our union with the Lord Jesus, and is sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." But the testimony which the Spirit bears is designed to meet the phase of Christian experience just adverted to—the painful uncertainty to the children of God themselves, by which this truth is often enshrouded. It is not for the benefit of our fellow-creatures, still less for the satisfaction of God himself, but *for the assurance and comfort of our own hearts, that the Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God.* The testimony is for the confirmation of our own faith, and the consolation of our own hearts.

But the question arises, *What is the mode of his testimony?* In attempting to supply an answer, we must acknowledge that we have no certain data to guide us. Sufficient light, however, beams from his work in general, to assist us in forming an intelligent and correct idea of his operations. How, then, may we suppose the Spirit witnesses with our spirit? Not by visions and voices; not by heats and fancies; nor by any direct inspiration, or new revelation of truth.

Far different from this is the mode of his testimony. We may gather from the measure of light vouchsafed, that he first *implants within the soul the germ of spiritual life, which beneath his culture produces the "fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."* From these we are left to draw the rational deduction of our adoption. If, for example, a child of God, with all lowliness of spirit, and after much prayerful inquiry, discover that, more or less, some of these effects of the Spirit's operation are developed in his experience, then it is no presumption in that individual, honestly and humbly to conclude that he is a child of God. This is the Spirit's witness, and he cannot gainsay it without wilful blindness, nor reject it without positive sin. *The breathing of the renewed heart after holiness*, supplies another illustration of the mode of the Spirit's testimony. The panting after Divine conformity is the Spirit's inspiration. Where, therefore, it exists, the deduction is, that the individual is a child of God. Thus, by begetting in us the Divine nature—by producing in us spiritual fruits—and by breathing in our souls a desire for holiness, the Spirit conducts us to the rational conclusion that we are born of God. By shedding abroad God's love in the soul by sprinkling the conscience with the atoning blood—by endearing the Savior to our hearts by leading us more simply to rest in his finished work, yes, to rest in himself—by creating and increasing love to the members of the one family, and fellowship with whatever is holy, and heavenly, and useful, he thus testifies to our divine relationship.

Nor would we pass by the harmony which subsists between the Bible and the experience of the sanctified heart, by which the Spirit witnesses that we are born of God. Whatever may be the mode of his testimony, it never contradicts the word of truth, but always is in perfect agreement with, and fully sustains it. As it is by the truth he quickens, and through the truth he sanctifies, so with the truth he witnesses. If our sentiments, and feelings, and actions are invariably and unequivocally opposed to God's revealed word, we may boast as we will of our divine relationship, we yet are self-deceived, and are "illegitimate children and not true sons." Is there in our lives a correspondence of Christian experience and revealed truth?

"I could not, without making my own doctrine outstrip my own experience, vouch for any other intimation of the Spirit of God, than that which he gives in the act of making the word of God clear unto you, and the state of your own heart clear unto you. From the one you draw what are its promises—from the other what are your own personal characteristics; and the application of the first to the second may conduct to a most legitimate argument, that you

personally are one of the saved—and that not in tardy or elaborate argument either, but with an evidence quick and powerful as the light of intuition. By a single deposition of conscience, for example, I may know that I do indeed hunger and thirst after righteousness; and by a single glance with the eye of my understanding, I may recognize a Savior's truth, and a Savior's tenderness in the promise that all who do so shall be filled; and without the intervention of any lengthened process of reasoning, I may confidently give to the general announcement in the gospel such a specific application to myself, as to convey my own distinct and assured hope of a particular interest therein. Thus there is no whisper of the Spirit distinct from the testimony of the word. Thus there is no irradiation, but that whereby the mind is enabled to look reflexly and with rational discernment upon itself. And hence there is no conclusion, but what comes immediately and irresistibly out of promises which are clear to me, while they lie hidden in deepest obscurity from other men: and all this you will observe with the rapidity of thought by a flight of steps so few, as to be got over in an instant of time—by a train of considerations strictly logical, while the mind that enjoys and is impressed with all this light is not sensible of any logic—and yet withal by the Spirit of God, for it is he who has brought the word near, and given it weight and significance to my understanding, and it is he who has manifested to me the thoughts and intents of my own heart, and evinced some personal characteristic within that is coincident with the promise without, and it is he who sustains me in the work of making a firm and confident application. In all this he utters no voice. The word of God made plain to my convictions, and his own work upon me made plain to my conscience—these are the vocables, and I do imagine the only vocables, by which he expresses himself; but enough to furnish any Christian with a reason of the hope that is in him, and better than articulation itself to solace and to satisfy the inquiring spirit of its relationship to the family of God." (Chalmers).

Nor is the *comfort* which the Spirit imparts the least evidence of our adoption. As our chastenings are marks of our sonship, equally so are our consolations. The kindly view the Spirit gives of our Father's dispensations—the meek submission of the will—the cordial acquiescence of the heart—and the entire surrender of the soul to God, which *he* creates, supplies us with indisputable ground for drawing a conclusion favorable to the reality of our being the children of God. There is a depth of sympathy and a degree of tenderness in God's comforts, which could only flow from the heart of a Father—that Father, God himself. "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him." Sweet to know that the correction and the consolation, the

wounding and the healing, flow from the same heart—come from the same hand, and each bear a message of love, and a token of sonship. Is the God of all comfort sustaining, soothing, and quieting your oppressed, chafed, and sorrowful heart? Oh, it is the Spirit's witness to your adoption. Bending to your grief, and associating himself with every circumstance of your sorrow, he seeks to seal on your softened heart the deeper, clearer impress of your filial interest in God's love. And oh, if this overwhelming bereavement—if this crushing stroke—if the bitterness and gloom of this hour be the occasion of the Spirit's gentle, gracious lifting you from the region of doubt and distress, as to your sonship, into the serene sunlight of your Father's love, so that you shall question, and doubt, and deny no more your acceptance in the Beloved, and your adoption into his family, will you not kiss the rod, and love the hand, and bless the heart that has smitten? One word in conclusion. Forget not that *the inward seal of adoption is testified by the outward seal of sanctification, and that if the Spirit of Christ is in your heart, the fruits of the Spirit will be exhibited in your life.* Then, thus meek, and gentle, and lowly, like the Savior; separated from the world, that you live not and joy not, as the world does—in the secret chamber of your soul you shall often hear the voice of God, saying, "I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

## **CHAPTER 17.**

### **"The Christian's Joint Heirship"**

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." Romans 8:17

"Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." Romans 8:17

"And since we are his children, we will share his treasures—for everything God gives to his Son, Christ, is ours, too. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering." Romans 8:17

It is a natural and graceful transition this from a consideration of the believer's relationship to God, and the nature of the evidence which makes it certain, to a consideration of his heirship, and the nature of the inheritance to

which that relationship links him. "If children, then heirs." The first truth that demands our attention is a vast and comprehensive one—God himself the inheritance of his people. Not only are they begotten by God as his children, and by a sovereign act of his most free mercy, have become the heirs of an inheritance—but subjectively, they are made the heirs of himself. "Heirs of God." Not only are all things in the covenant theirs, but the God of the covenant is theirs. This is their greatest mercy. "I am your part and your inheritance," are his words addressed to all his spiritual Levites. Not only are they put in possession of all that God has—a boundless wealth; but they are in present possession of all that God is—an infinite Portion. And what an immense truth is this, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people!" Take out this truth from the covenant of grace, were it possible, and what remains? It is the chief wealth and the great glory of that covenant that God is our God. This it is that gives substance to its blessings, and security to its foundation. So long as faith can retain its hold upon the God of the covenant, as our God, it can repose with perfect security in expectation of the full bestowment of all the rest. Here lies our vast, infinite, and incomputable wealth. What constitutes the abject poverty of an ungodly man? His being without God in the world. His earthly possessions may be boundless; he may look out from the crystal windows of his castellated mansion upon a far-spreading and magnificent domain, and exclaim, "This is all my own" yet is he poor! and when death relaxes his grasp, and summons him to the account of his stewardship, he closes his eyes upon all his proud possessions, and his only portion, and that forever, is the "worm that never dies, and the fire that is never quenched." Be you, my reader, rich or poor, high or low in this world, without God, you are undone to all eternity! It is but of trivial moment whether you die in rags and lowliness, or go in ermine and pomp to the torments of the lost—those torments will be your changeless inheritance, living and dying without God, and without Christ, and without hope. But contrast this with the state of the poorest child of God. The universe is not only his—"for all things are yours"—but *the God of the universe is his*—"The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore will I hope in him." We have a deathless interest in every perfection of the Divine nature. Is it Wisdom? It counsels him. Is it Power? It shields him. Is it Love? It soothes him. Is it Mercy? It upholds him. Is it Truth? It cleaves to him. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people, from henceforth, even for evermore." What more can we ask than this? If God be ours, we possess the substance and the security of every other blessing. When the Lord appeared to Abraham, with what truth did he seek to win his confidence, and ask his obedience! "I am the Almighty God." And then

follows the precept, "Walk before me and be perfect." And this is just the truth with which God would preface every blessing, and comfort us in all our tribulation. "They shall be my people, and I will be their God." He would bring us to an absolute trust in an absolute God. Winning us to an entire relinquishment of all expectation from any other source, he would allure us to his feet with the language of the Church breathing from our lips—"Behold we come unto you, for you are the Lord our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel." And again, "Asshur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, You are our gods: for in you the fatherless finds mercy." Only in the Lord our God is our salvation—only in him does the orphan find the mercy that soothes, provides, and encompasses him as a shield. Nor the fatherless only: is he not equally the covenant God of the widow? "I am married unto you," says God. And again, "Your Maker is your husband (the Lord of hosts is his name)." And yet again, "Let your widows trust in me." Thus does he by words the most persuasive, and by imagery the most touching, seek to endear himself to us as our Portion. It is in the heart of our God to give us the chief and the best. Had there been a greater, and a better, and a sweeter, and a more satisfying portion than *himself*, then that portion had been ours. But since there is not, nor can be, a greater than he, the love, the everlasting, changeless love that he bears to us, constrains him to give himself as our God, our Portion, our All. And have we not experienced him to be God all-sufficient? Have we ever found a lack in him? May he not justly challenge us, and ask, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" Oh no! God is all-sufficient, and no arid wilderness, and no dreary land have we experienced him to be. There is in him an all-sufficiency of love to comfort us; an all-sufficiency of strength to uphold us; an all-sufficiency of power to protect us; an all-sufficiency of good to satisfy us; an all-sufficiency of wisdom to guide us; an all-sufficiency of glory to reward us; and an all-sufficiency of bliss to make us happy here, and happy to all eternity! "This God is our God forever and ever, and he will be our guide even unto death." "In your presence there is fullness of joy, and at your right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Such is the inheritance to which, as children of God, we are the heirs.

"Joint-heirs with Christ." This must be understood in a limited, though still in a very enlarged sense. In its highest meaning—touching the Essential Deity of our Lord—he is the Heir of all things. All worlds and all souls are his. All things were created by, and for him. Heaven is his throne, and earth is his

footstool. To participation in this heirship we cannot be admitted. Nor can there be any conjointure with Christ in the *merit* that purchased our redemption. Here again he is alone, no creature aiding the work, or dividing the glory. But, mediatorially, in consequence of the union subsisting between Christ and his people, they become heirs with him in all the privileges and hopes appertaining to his kingdom. Our union to the Lord Jesus brings us into the possession of vast and untold blessings. On the basis of his atonement we build our claim. He merits all, and we possess all. All the immunities and glories of our present and eternal inheritance flow to us through Christ. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance." "If a son, then an heir of God through Christ." We cannot lay too great stress on this truth. We possess nothing—we receive nothing—we expect nothing but *through Christ*. All is given to us in consideration of a Righteousness which upholds and honors the Divine Government. Jesus is the meritorious Recipient, and we receive only through him. "If you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." "Knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance." And yet again, alluding to our right to, and our possession of, our inheritance, the Apostle traces both to the atonement of the Son of God—"And for this cause he is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." Thus it is alone through the "fitness" imparted by Christ, the *merit* he substitutes in our behalf, and the *righteousness* he imputes to us, that we become "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Blessed Redeemer! to what dignity and honor, to what privilege and blessing, to what hope and glory our union with you has advanced us! We were fallen, and you have lifted us up; we were poor, and you have enriched us; we were naked, and you have clothed us; we were aliens, and you have made us children; we were bankrupts, and you have made us heirs; we lost all from fatal union with the first Adam; we receive all, and infinitely more, by our glorious union with you, the Second Adam. Oh for a heart to love you! Oh for grace to glorify you! Be increasingly precious to us, and may we be increasingly devoted to you!

But observe *in what this joint-heirship consists*—suffering, and glory.

"If so be that we *suffer* with him." It is first an heirship of suffering. "If so be," or, as it has been rendered, "Seeing that we suffer with him;" thus removing any seeming idea of suffering being a meritorious cause of glory. As Christ is the Head, and we the body, there is a fellowship of condition, a sympathy of suffering of the closest character. Most assuredly there is a sense

in which we could have no actual participation in the sufferings of our Lord—the sense in which those sufferings were *expiatory*. But mystically, the church suffered with the Head. And having begun in suffering, suffering more or less, tracks our course to glory. "If any man will come after me," says Christ, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." "If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him." *Suffering in inseparable from true godliness.* "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." Thus our very union with Christ involves suffering with Christ. We are joint-heirs with the "Man of sorrows." We are united to a *crucified* Head. We cannot assert any valid claim to a union with Christ, and plead exemption from trial. Our fellowship with him in his sufferings is the seal of our heirship with him in his glory. Do you see a professed disciple of the Lord Jesus exempt from all sorrow—from that sorrow, we mean, peculiar to the chastened and disciplined sons of God? you see him lacking one of the strongest and most valid evidences of sonship. "For if you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you illegitimate children and not true sons." *Suffering is the beaten path to heaven.* A public avowal of adherence to Christ—allegiance to his authority—fidelity to his truth—separation from the world as a professed disciple of Jesus—will often entail suffering of a most humiliating and painful character.

But let us not overlook the alleviations. It is not, as in the case of our Lord, unmixed suffering—suffering borne alone. When he sorrowed in the garden, his disciples slept. When he was accused at Pilate's bar, one of them denied him. When suspended upon the cross, all of them forsook him. He was alone in suffering. But when we suffer, it is a suffering *with* Christ. In all our affliction he is afflicted. He suffers with us. There is an outflow of the purest, tenderest human sympathy. Our spirit is never oppressed, our heart is never sad, our love is never wounded, our principles are never assailed, our persons are never persecuted, but Christ is with us in the closest alliance. "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute ME?" With such a fellow-sufferer at our side, why should we fret and murmur and repine? "Unto us it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." We must, if his true disciples, drink of the cup that he drank of, and be baptized with the baptism that he was baptized with; for "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps." Oh, sweet words! "If so be that we suffer with him." Not as he suffered. Oh, no! there is no curse, no wrath, no hell in the cup of sorrow which we drink. All these ingredients composed *his* bitter draught. Yet he suffers with us, and permits our afflictions to be called the "afflictions of Christ." He is with you on that bed of sickness; he is

with you on that couch of languishing; he is with you in that darkened room; he kneels with you at that coffin; and he weeps with you by the side of that sepulcher. Oh, may it not reconcile us to all the suffering we have ever endured, or may yet be called to endure, to feel the perfect oneness, the presence, the sympathy, the succourings of such a Savior? Who would wish to shun the obloquy of his cross, the scorn of his name, the lowliness of his kingdom, the self-denial of his religion, allied in the tenderest sympathy at every step with this illustrious Martyr—this Prince of sufferers—this Brother born for adversity? Blessed school of heavenly training! By this afflictive process, oh, of what profounder teaching, what deeper purification have we become the favored subjects! It is *good* for us to have been afflicted. Now have we, like our Lord, learned obedience by the things which we have suffered; and like him, too, are being made perfect through suffering. The heart has been emptied of its self-confidence—the shrine has been despoiled of its idol—the affections that had been seduced from God, have returned to their rest—the ties that bound us to the vanities of a world, perishing in its very using, have become loosened—the engagements that absorbed our sympathies, and secularized our minds, have lost their fascination and their power—the beguiling and treacherous enjoyments that wove their spell around us, have grown tasteless and insipid—and thus, by all these blessed and hallowed *results of our trial*, the image of the earthy has become more entirely effaced, and the image of the heavenly more deeply engraven, and more distinctly legible.

"That we may be glorified together." As suffering precedes glory, so glory assuredly follows suffering. Thus was it with our Lord. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" The Apostle speaks of himself as a "witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." Our Lord is in glory. The head that once bowed in death, pale and bleeding, is now raised in life, encircled with a glory brighter than ten thousand suns. The humanity that was despised from the lowliness of its birth, that was mocked, and scourged, and spit upon, and slain, is now, from its indissoluble union with the Deity, exalted far above principalities and powers, glorified with the glory he had with the Father before the world was. Having purged our sins, he is set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. To that glory which belongs to him as the Mediator of the Church, each suffering confessor of Christ shall be exalted—the body with the Head, and each part of that body with the whole. A joint-heirship of suffering, it is now a joint-heirship of glory: "We shall be glorified together with Christ." Still the oneness is manifest, and never so clearly seen

as now. Glory bathes it in its light, and eternity impresses it with its seal. It is an undimmed and changeless glory. And Christ acknowledges their right to this oneness in glory. As they were not ashamed of him among men, he is not now ashamed of them among angels. As they linked themselves to his cross, he binds them to his throne. As they confessed him before the world, he now confesses them before his Father. "Glorified together." Wondrous words! Elevated to his side—leaning upon his bosom—gazing on his beauty—listening to his voice—entering into his joy—at home, and forever with the Lord. Now is answered in its fullness, the prayer mingled with tears, and breathed from the scene of his suffering below—"Father, I will that they also whom you have given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." Welcome the suffering, succeeded by such glory. Welcome the cross, followed by such a crown.

Let us learn to regard our present tutorage as preparatory to our future inheritance. "The heir as long as he is a child, differs nothing from a servant, though he be Lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father." Thus is it with us. But soon we shall attain our adulthood and come into possession of our estate. Before long we shall be done with governors and tutors, and need no more the lessons of the school, and the discipline of suffering. Oh, let us live in its near anticipation.

To the poor of Christ's flock how animating the prospect! "Has not God chosen the poor of this world, to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him?" What though straitened resources, what though pinching poverty, what though absolute neediness, be your present allotment, lift up your heads with joy, for you have a joint-heirship with Christ in a kingdom which your Heavenly Father will give. Confide in its security. It is made sure to you by Divine oath—"Wherein God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath." Thus inalienably is it secured. Death, which robs the earthly heir of his inheritance, puts you in possession of yours. Your estate comes not to you robed in mourning, for your Father never dies. No succession awaits you, for your inheritance is yours forever. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."

## **CHAPTER 18.**

### **"Present Suffering Weighed with Future Glory"**

**"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Romans 8:18**

**"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." Romans 8:18**

**"Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will give us later." Romans 8:18**

**How forcible are the words, and how powerful is the influence, of an experienced man of God! In listening to his testimony, we feel the deep conviction that he believes and therefore speaks; that he testifies, not from what others have described, but from what he has himself felt. Such is the testimony of Paul. Who, of mere men, could so well expatiate upon suffering—its varied forms, its appropriate soothing, and its hallowed results, as he? "I will show him how great things he shall suffer for my name's sake," were the words of the Savior as he predicted his future history, dating it from his miraculous conversion, to his glorious martyrdom. Having affirmed of the Christian's sufferings—that they were endured in alliance with the Savior, and would be succeeded by a glory again to be shared with him, the Apostle proceeds to *contrast those sufferings with that glory*, and concludes by summing up the vast disproportion of the one to the other—"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."**

**Dismissing any further minute reference to the sufferings of the believer, he contents himself, in the present instance, with simply alluding to their temporary existence. He characterizes them as the "sufferings of this present time." That the sufferings of the believer are bounded by the limits of the present state, is a truth replete with soothing to the Christian mind. Earth is the "house of our pilgrimage." The present life is the "time of our sojourning." "Here we have no continuing city." Alas! how we forget that we are but strangers and pilgrims on the earth; that we are journeying to our home, and will soon be there! And yet we would not pen a sentence tending to lessen the dignity and importance of our present existence, or calculated to**

engender a spirit of dissatisfaction and distrust with our present allotment. There is much folly, no, much infidelity in a remark common to many—"It will be all the same a hundred years hence." Not so. The relation of the present to the future is *causal*; it is a relation of the closest character, and of the most solemn results. *Time is the infant of eternity*. It is its commencement; and is, in a sense, its most momentous part. Shaded with grief, linked with suffering, and transient in its stay, yet all the future receives its complexion and its character from the present. The life that now is, casts its light or its shade upon the life that is to come. Eternity will be bright or gloomy, joyous or sad, happy or miserable, as time shall impart to it its complexion and its shape. Each individual of the human race is training for the future; and as a man sows so shall he reap. Will you, then, my reader, in view of this statement of truth, persist in believing that, regarding any given act of your life, when that life shall have passed away, with it will have passed all the accountability, and all the traces of that act; and that a century hence it will be as though it had not been? Away with the fatal fallacy! If it be true, as philosophers assert, that sounds once awakened, vibrate through eternity, what shall be said of the moral actions of a rational, responsible, and accountable being, but that they form links in an interminable chain, each quivering with indescribable agony, or thrilling with unspeakable pleasure through an endless existence!

And still the sufferings of the children of God are but the *sufferings of the present time*. That world where Satan's seat is, and overshadowed by his gloomy reign, must be a world of suffering. "Satan, where have you come from?" was the inquiry of God. "Then Satan answered the Lord and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." The world where not a spot is found unscathed by the curse must be a world of suffering. The world where sin holds its universal empire, tainting every object, and beclouding every scene, must be a world of suffering. The world where the spirit is wounded, and the heart is broken, and reason is dethroned, and hope languishes, and the eye weeps, and the nerve trembles, and sickness wastes, and death reigns, must needs be a world of suffering. From none of these forms of woe does Christianity exempt its believers. But with this truth, on the other hand, it soothes and reconciles—they are *the sufferings of the present time*. They are but momentary, will soon be over—and forever. We live in a dying world—a world that is passing away. Time is short—is ever on the wing—and we are ever on the wing of time, borne each moment by its sweeping pinion nearer and still nearer our Father's house; of whose occupants it is said, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither, shall there be any

more pain: for the former things are passed away." Oh, how gentle is the admonition—"Arise, and depart, for this is not your rest, it is polluted." Then comes the *glory*—"The glory which shall be revealed in us." What word could more appropriately express the future condition of the saints? The world claims the *title*, but has no claim to the *reality*. What is the glory of science—of learning—of rank—of wealth, but a tinselled pageant, a meteor blazing for a moment, and then disappearing in eternal night? But the glory that awaits the suffering Christian, is a real, a substantial glory. At present it is veiled. The world sees it not; the believer only beholds it through faith's telescope. But the day of its full, unclouded revelation awaits us. It draws near. It will be a glory *revealed in us*. This truth may be startling to some. "What!" they exclaim, "a glory to be revealed in me? In me, who can scarcely reflect a solitary ray of light! In me, so dark, so sinful, living at so remote a distance from communion with the Father of lights? Can it be that in me this glory will be revealed?" Yes! So affirms the word of our God. If a child of the light, dwelling it may be, in the world's shade, and often called to walk in great darkness, you shall one day outshine the brightness of the firmament, and the stars forever and ever.

But in what respects will it be a glory revealed in us? It will be the glory of perfect knowledge. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." Oh, what an orb of intellectual light will be each glorified mind! What capacity of understanding will it develop—what range of thought will it compass—what perfection of knowledge will it attain! How will all mysteries then be unraveled, and all problems then be solved, and all discrepancies then be reconciled; and every truth of God's revelation, and every event of God's providence, and every decision of God's government, stand out more transparent and resplendent than ten thousand suns! Do you, in your present search for spiritual knowledge, deplore the darkness of your mind, the feebleness of your memory—the energy of your mental faculties impaired, dimmed, and exhausted? Oh, rejoice in hope of the glory that is to be revealed in you, when all your intellectual powers will be renewed as the eagle's strength; developed, sanctified, and perfected, to a degree outvying the mightiest angel in heaven. Then shall we know God, and Christ, and truth, and providence, and ourselves, even as now we are known.

It will also be a glory in us of perfect holiness. The kingdom within us will then be complete. The good work of grace will then be perfected. It will be the consummation of holiness, the perfection of purity. No more sin! The

conscience no more sullied—the thoughts no more defiled—the affections no more ensnared—but a glory of holiness, dazzling and resplendent, beyond an angel's, revealed in us. "It does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, *we shall be like him.*"

The glory of perfect happiness will be the certain effect of perfect sanctity. The completeness of Christ is the completeness of moral purity. With reverence be it spoken, "God himself could not be a perfectly happy, were he not a perfectly holy Being." The radiance of the glorified countenance of the saints will be the reflection of holy thoughts and holy feelings glowing within. Joy, and peace, and full satisfaction will beam in every feature, because every faculty, and feeling, and emotion of the soul will be in perfect unison with the will, and in perfect assimilation to the image of God. Who can paint the happiness of that world from where everything is banished that could sully its purity, disturb its harmony, and ruffle its repose? Where everything is included that comports with its sanctity, harmonizes with its grandeur, and heightens its bliss. Oh, yes! it will be a glory revealed in us. The glory of the Father's adoption—the glory of Christ's atonement—the glory of the Spirit's regeneration, radiating from a poor, fallen son of Adam—a sinner redeemed, renewed, and saved! And what is each present ray of heavenly light—and each thrill of Divine love—and each victory of indwelling grace—and each glimpse of the upper world, but the foreshadowings of the glory yet to be revealed in us?

Suffering and glory thus placed side by side, thus contrasted and weighed, to what conclusion does our Apostle arrive? "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." *No, not worthy of a comparison!* Do we measure their relative duration? Then, "our light affliction is but for a moment," while our glory is a "far more exceeding and eternal weight." Before long all suffering and sorrow will forever have passed away—a thing of history and of memory only—while glory will deepen and expand as eternity rolls on its endless ages. Do we compare them? What comparison has the weight of the cross, with the weight of the crown? Place in the scales the present "light affliction," and the future "exceeding and eternal weight of glory," which is the lightest? are they worthy to be compared? Oh, no! One second of glory will extinguish a lifetime of suffering. What were long years of toil, of sickness, of battle with poverty, and persecution, and sorrow in every form, and closing even with a martyr's death, compared with one draught of the river of pleasure at Christ's right hand—with one breath of Paradise—with one wave of heaven's glory—with

one embrace of Jesus, with one sight of God?

**Oh, what are the pangs of present separation, in comparison with the joy of future reunion? What the pinchings of poverty now, with the untold riches then? What the suffering, and gloom, and contempt of the present time, with the glory that is to be revealed in us? We can go no further. Tell us, you spirits of just men made perfect, if it be lawful, if it be possible—what the glory that awaits us is! Tell us what it is to be an unclothed spirit—to dwell in the bosom of Jesus to see God—to be perfectly holy—to be supremely happy! Wait, my soul! before long it will be all revealed!**

## **CHAPTER 19.**

### **"The Earnest Expectation of the Renewed Creature**

**"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Romans 8:19-21**

**"The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God." Romans 8:19-21**

**"For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. Against its will, everything on earth was subjected to God's curse. All creation anticipates the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay." Romans 8:19-21**

**We have now arrived at what has been regarded as, perhaps, the most remarkable and difficult passages in this chapter. It would answer no purpose, but to perplex the reader's mind, were we to quote the various, conflicting, and often extremely fanciful interpretations which they have received from critics of equal learning and piety. Rejecting at once the interpretations of the term "creature" which restrict it to the Gentile nations in opposition to the Jews—to unconverted men in distinction from the sons of**

God—to mankind in general—and lastly, to the irrational creation, we at once propose for the acceptance of the reader, as being to our own mind the most fair and correct meaning of the term, that interpretation which predicates it of *the renewed creature—the Christian in his regenerate state*. A slight examination of the connection in which the passages stand will, we think, justify and sustain this view. What appears to be the scope and design of the Apostle in the verses immediately preceding those under consideration? He had been addressing himself to suffering believers in Christ. His aim was to fortify their minds under trial by arraying before them the strong consolations of the Gospel, and by unveiling to their view the animating prospect of a certain and glorious deliverance—the "manifestation of the sons of God." To whom could all this correctly and appropriately apply, but to the renewed creature? Let it be considered, too, what the nature of this prospect is, for which the "creature" is represented as "waiting" in the posture of "earnest expectation." Is it not most spiritual, holy, and glorious? Does it not seem a lowering of the dignity, and a shading of the luster of that prospect, to represent either the animal creation, or the unregenerate mass of mankind, as waiting with outstretched neck, and panting desire, and earnest expectation, the period of its arrival? Of whom can all this be reasonably predicated but of the renewed creature? And thus is the believer frequently called. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." It is, then, of the new man, "created in Christ Jesus," that we, without hesitation, interpret the term "creature," as employed in these remarkable verses. Read the passages once more with this rendering; and we think that both their meaning and their beauty will be instantly apparent. Having thus explained the sense in which we propose to use the term, let us now proceed to open the text.

The present state of the renewed creature is described as one of humiliation. "The creature was made subject to vanity." The vanity here referred to is opposed to the state of glory in anticipation, and therefore expresses the condition of corruption and trial in the midst of which the renewed creature dwells, and to the assaults of which it is incessantly exposed. The world through which the Christian is passing to his rest may be emphatically called a state of vanity. How perpetually and forcibly are we reminded of the King of Israel's exclamation, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." "Surely every man walks in a vain show." His origin, the earth; his birth, degenerate; his rank, a bauble; his wealth, but glittering dust; his pomp, an empty pageant; his beauty, a fading flower; his pursuits, an infant's play; his honors, vexations of spirit; his joys, fleeting as a cloud; his life, transient as a

vapor; his final home, a grave. "Surely man in his best estate is altogether vanity." And what is his religion but vanity? His native holiness, a vain conceit; his natural light, Egyptian darkness; his human wisdom, egregious folly; his religious forms, and rites, and duties, "a vain show in the flesh;" his most gorgeous righteousness, "filthy rags." In the impressive language of Scripture, of him it may be said, "That man's religion is vain." Lord! what is man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you regard him? Truly, "vanity" is inscribed in legible characters on each created good. How, then, can the renewed creature escape its influence? He is "subject to vanity." Dazzled by its glare, captivated by its fascinations, ensnared by its promises, he is often the victim of its power. But it is not a voluntary subjection on the part of the renewed creature. "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly." It is not with him a condition of choice. He loves it not, he prefers it not, he glories not in it. From it he would sincerely be freed beyond it he would gladly soar. "For we who are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." His prayer is, "Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken you me in your way." He pants for a holier and a happier state—a state more congenial with his renewed nature. Like the Israelites under the Egyptian bondage, he is a most unwilling servant, groaning beneath his galling yoke, and "sighing for the glorious liberty of the children of God." Ah, yes! God has given you another will, O renewed creature! and your present subjection to this poor, vain world, is an involuntary subjection of the divine nature within you. Why God should have subjected the renewed creature to vanity does not appear; we well know that he could have transferred us to heaven the moment that he renewed us on earth. But may we not infer that in sending his people into the world, after he had called them by his grace, and, in a sense, taken them out of it, that in subjecting them for so many years to this state of vanity, he has best consulted his own glory and their good? The school of their heavenly teaching, the scene of their earthly toil, and the theater of their spiritual conflict, they are kept in this world for a season; "made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who has subjected the same in hope." Harken to the words of their great Intercessor, when breathing forth his prayer for them on earth—"These are in the world, and I come to you. I pray not that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil. As you have sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." Not into the solitude of the desert—not into the calm, but selfish repose of the domestic circle—not into the hallowed but restricted fellowship of the church—but into the world—

encircling them, for a season, by its vanity, and subjecting them to its trials. And what is their mission? That they should love the world? harmonize with the world? fraternize with the world? Oh, no! Not for this were they sent into it. An object more worthy of His wisdom who sends, and more in harmony with their high calling who are sent, is before them. They are sent into the world that their lives should be a constant, uncompromising, and solemn protest against its vanities and its sins. Mark again the words of Christ—"As you have sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." Christ was commissioned to testify of the world that the works thereof were evil. He came to labor for the world—to bless the world—to honor his Father in the world. And, oh, it was the glory of this world that the Son of God was sent into it—that he made it for a while the place of his temporary abode, and the scene of his stupendous redemption. It was the glory of the earth that he trod upon its turf. It was the glory of the ocean that he sailed upon its bosom. It was the glory of the sun that it beamed upon his head. It was the glory of the air that it fanned his brow. It was the glory of the waters that they quenched his thirst. It was the glory of the flowers that they perfumed his path. It was the glory of the sky that it spread above him its blue canopy. What planet has been so honored as this? What world so visited, so distinguished, so blest? Such is the Christian's pattern. Why has Christ placed you in the position you now occupy? Why are you begirt with so much folly, and trial, and danger? You are converted in the midst of the world—your family is in the world—your associates are in the world—your calling is in the world. Why is it so? Even that like your Lord and Master you might by your unworldly, unearthly, heavenly life testify of the world that the works thereof are evil, and only evil, and evil continually.

One more phrase completes this picture of our present humiliation: "The bondage of corruption." There is nothing in these words that disproves a declaration of the same Apostle in another place, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." And yet it must be admitted of the believer that he is under the "bondage of corruption." Who of the family of God is exempt? Imprisoned and fettered by the inherent corruption of his fallen nature, the renewed creature exclaims with the Apostle, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I

who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" Romans 7:15-24. It is the bondage of corruption, and yet the bondage of those whom Christ has made free, and to whom there is "now no condemnation."

But painful and humiliating as is the present condition of the renewed creature, it is yet one of earnest expectation and of hope: "Who has subjected the same in hope." From this state of vanity, and bondage of corruption, the believer is expecting and hoping to be delivered. His gesture is most expressive—it is that of earnest expectation. And are we not in truth earnest expectants? Would we live always here? Could we be content that this state of vanity should be our condition forever? Ah, no! we expect a better and a holier state than this. With outstretched neck we are looking for the sunny coast towards which we are voyaging. With earnest expectation we are watching for the signs of his approach, who will restore all things: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ." Hope, too, rises like the day-spring from on high in our souls. If we are in the bondage of corruption, we yet are "prisoners of hope." Not always shall we be thus fettered. Not forever shall we look out from the bars of our prison, and exclaim, "Why are his chariot wheels so long in coming?" Oh, no! hope, building upon the atoning work of Christ—hope, springing from his open grave—hope, beaming down from the throne in heaven, within whose veil as an anchor it is cast—"hope that makes not ashamed" sheds its luster upon all the future, clothing its landscape with verdure, and silvering it with beauty. Prisoner of hope! lift up your head and rejoice, for your redemption draws near. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

The great consummation toward which this expectation and hope tends is the "manifestation of the sons of God." The sons of God are at present incognito. Unknown to the world, often veiled, in a great degree, to the brotherhood, and sometimes ignorant of their own divine relation, the Church of God is anything but a visible body. But it will not be always so. There is fast hastening a day of perfect manifestation. The sons of God shall be known. Their relationship will be manifest—their principles will be manifest—their

glory will be manifest before the universe. Emerging from the obscurity of the wilderness into which she had been driven, throwing off the sackcloth in which she had so long prophesied, the Church of God, the adoption of the Father, will stand forth before an astonished and admiring world clothed in all the glories of the manifested sons of God. More than this—they will be manifested to themselves. Self-disguise will no longer prompt the trembling inquiry, "Am I a child of God?" That question will now be answered by a testimony to the fact, clear and convincing as the noontide light, before whose brightness every gloomy doubt and slavish fear will vanish as the morning grey, with all the objects looming in its mist, vanish before the uprising sun. For this the renewed creature is in the posture of earnest expectation. "We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."

Connected with this blessed condition there is yet another not less so: "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." They are already in possession of a liberty most costly and precious. Is it no true liberty to stand before God accepted in the Beloved? Is it no liberty to draw near to him with all the confidence of a child reposing in the boundless affection of a loving father? Is it no liberty to travel day by day to Jesus, always finding him an open door of sympathy the most exquisite, of love the most tender, and of grace the most overflowing? Is it, in a word, no real liberty to be able to lay faith's hand upon the everlasting covenant, and exclaim, "There is now no condemnation?" Oh yes! This is the liberty with which Christ has made us free. But the glorious liberty of the children of God is *yet to come*. Glorious it will be because more manifest and complete. Including all the elements of our present freedom, it will embrace others not yet enjoyed. We shall be emancipated from the body of sin and of death. Every fetter of corruption will be broken, and every tie of sense will be dissolved. All sadness will be chased from our spirit, all sorrow from our heart, and all cloud from our mind. Delivered from all sin, and freed from all suffering, we shall wander through the many mansions of our Father's house, and tread the star-paved streets of the celestial city, and repose beneath the sylvan bowers of the upper Paradise, and drink of the waters, clear as crystal, that flow from beneath the throne—our pure, and blissful, and eternal home—exulting in the "glorious liberty of the children of God."

In conclusion—how striking and solemn is the contrast between the present and the future state of the believer and the unbeliever! Yours, too, unregenerate reader, is a state of vanity. But, alas! it is a most *willing*

subjection, and the bondage of corruption which holds you is uncheered by one ray of hope of final deliverance. What a terrible and humiliating bondage, a willing slave to sin and Satan! All is vanity which you so eagerly pursue. "The Lord knows the thoughts of men that they are vanity." Were it possible for you to realize all the schemes of wealth, and distinction, and pleasure, and happiness which now float in gorgeous visions before your fevered imagination, still would your heart utter its mournful and bitter complaint, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." Oh, turn from these vain shadows to Jesus, the substance of all true wealth, and happiness, and honor. That fluttering heart will never find repose until it rests in him. That craving soul will never be satisfied until it be satisfied with Christ. At his feet, then, cast yourself down, and with the tears of penitence, and the reliance of faith, and the expectation of hope, ask to be numbered among the adopted, who shall before long be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

## **CHAPTER 20.**

### **"A Suffering World in Sympathy with Suffering Man"**

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. Romans 8:22

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Romans 8:22

For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Romans 8:22

From the ruin of man, our Apostle naturally turns his consideration to the ruin in which the apostasy of man plunged the whole creation—animate and inanimate. If another link were needed to perfect the chain of evidence demonstrating the existence of the Divine curse for man's sin, this passage would seem to supply it. We read of no *blight* resting on the material world, of no *suffering* in the brute creation, prior to the period of Adam's transgression. The present is just the reverse of the original constitution of the world. When God made all things he pronounced them very good. We delight to look back and imagine what this world was when, like a newborn planet, it burst from the Fountain of Light, all clad with beauty, radiant with holiness, and

eloquent with praise. The winds blew not rudely then—the verdure withered and died not then—the flowers drooped and faded not then. There were no tornadoes, no earthquakes, no volcanoes, no electric clouds. All the materials and elements of nature were harmless, and in harmony, because all were sinless. Innocence and happiness reigned over the irrational creation. The whole world was at rest, because man was at peace with God, at peace with his fellows, at peace with himself. There was nothing to darken, to hurt, or destroy in all God's holy mountain. Man was in "league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field were at peace with him." Oh, what a world of love, and what a picture of loveliness was our pure creation then! But what is it now?

"The whole creation groans and travails in pain." Speak we of the material world? What is our earth, but a globe of volcanic fire, smouldering in its center, ever and anon bursting forth and burying smiling villages and magnificent cities beneath its torrents of flame? What is the wind, but a fierce sirocco, bearing pestilence and death upon its sweeping wings? And what is the sea, but a vast cemetery, its mountain waves the crested monuments of the millions it has engulfed in its yawning abyss? Yes, what are earth, and air, and water, but agents of destruction, messengers of death to man, as if in vengeance for his sin? Speak we of the brute creation? How does it groan and travail in pain! To what suffering, what cruelty, what death is it subject! Yes, every creature that we meet, and every object we behold, supplies an evidence of man's fall, and bears the frown of God's curse. *One loud, agonizing, and universal wail of mourning, lamentation, and woe* bursts from the whole creation, as it groans and travails in pain, from the first moment of the apostasy until now.

Let us pause and contemplate this overpowering evidence of sin. Why is the ground cursed? Why is this once beautiful and fertile earth sown with briars and noxious weeds? so that, were the laborer to withdraw his hand, the richest and loveliest spot would be abandoned to the spontaneous and luxuriant growth of the deadly nightshade, and the poisonous nettle, and unpruned trees, and wild forests—the haunt of every savage beast, and the abode of man yet more savage. Why this ferocity and deadly enmity in the brute creation—tribe warring with tribe, and animal the prey and food of animal? Because of man's transgression. Oh, Sin, what have you done! Thus closely is a suffering world linked with suffering man. Thus the whole creation—material and animal—sympathizes with the weight of woe that crushes our race to the earth. When man fell, God cursed the ground, and cursed the brutes of the

field, for man's sake; and now the whole creation groans and travails in pain until the time of the restitution of all things shall arrive.

It will not, we trust, be considered either inappropriate to, or beneath the dignity of our subject, if we, in this connection, point out the proper feeling of sympathy with which the sufferings of the brute creation should be regarded by *man, the author of those sufferings*. We have already adverted to the fact of the origin of all woe—man's sin. And yet, clear as this is, how fearfully is the suffering of inferior tribes, first occasioned by human transgression, aggravated and increased by human cruelty! It is impossible to open the eye without seeing the fact, or to contemplate it, when seen, without horror. The dominion and authority which God gave man over the beasts of the field contained no clause whatever giving him a right or power to subject them to the exercise of unnecessary suffering and barbarity. We find the terms of the original grant to be, "The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moves upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered." But is not the authority over the irrational creature with which man is here invested, a restricted authority? Unquestionably. Is he warranted by the terms of the grant to exercise the plenitude of power thus given, arbitrarily, ferociously, inhumanely? Is it a liberty to use the brute creation as he pleases? By no means. It is the authority of man made in the similitude of Him who is love, extending over brute dependants, and not the authority of demons over their helpless victims. It is impossible, too, to contemplate the natural condition of the animal world—their susceptibility of pain, and their sense of kindness, gratefully and unmistakably shown, without tracing a strong resemblance to ourselves. "These poor animals," remarks an eloquent and benevolent writer, "just look and tremble, and give forth the very indications of suffering that we do. Theirs is the distinct cry of pain—theirs is the unequivocal physiognomy of pain—they put on the same aspect of terror on the demonstration of a menaced blow—they exhibit the same distortions of agony after the infliction of it. The bruise, or the burn, or the fracture, or the deep incision, or the fierce encounter with one of equal or inferior strength, just affects them similarly to ourselves. Their blood circulates as ours—they have pulsations in various parts of the body like ours—they sicken and they grow feeble with age, and finally die just as we do—they possess the same feelings, and what exposes them to like suffering from another quarter, they possess the same instincts with our own species. The lioness robbed of her whelps, causes the wilderness to ring aloud with the proclamation of her wrongs; and the bird whose little household has been taken, fills and saddens

all the grove with melodies of the deepest pathos. All this is palpable even to the general and unlearned eye; and when the physiologist lays open the recesses of their system by means of that scalpel under whose operation they just shrink and are convulsed as any living subject of our own species, there stands forth to view the same sentient apparatus, and furnished with the same conductors for the transmission of feeling to every minutest pore upon the surface. Theirs is unmixed and unmitigated pain—the agonies of martyrdom, without the alleviation of the hopes and the sentiments whereof they are incapable. When they lay them down to die, their only fellowship is with suffering; for in the prison-house of their bounded faculties, there can no relief be afforded of communion with other interests or other things. The attention does not lighten their distress, as it does that of man, by carrying off his spirit from that existing pungency and pressure which might else be overwhelming. There is but room in their mysterious economy for one inmate, and that is the absorbing sense of their own single and concentrated anguish. And so in that bed of torment, whereon the wounded animal lingers and expires, there is a depth and intensity of suffering, which the poor dumb animal itself cannot tell, and against which it can offer no remonstrance; an untold and unknown amount of wretchedness, of which no articulate voice gives utterance. But there is an eloquence in its silence, and the very shroud which disguises it, only serves to aggravate its horrors!" (Chalmers). To say nothing of the spirit and the precepts of Christianity, where is the humanity that from sinister motives can overwork, or from a love of sport can wantonly and cruelly abuse the jaded and suffering, yet noble brute, placed in our power, contributing to our convenience, and over whom God has constituted us not the lord but the guardian—not the tormentor, but the friend? And who can think of the pastime of 'the pit', and the sports of the field, and the needless torture of the slaughter-house, without a cheek burning with indignation? But God, the infinitely great God, has a tender regard for the irrational part of his creation. He commands us to be their advocate against heartless cruelties: "Open your mouth for the dumb." And he will, hating nothing that he has created, make inquisition for blood; he will redress their wrongs, and visit their merciless taskmasters and inhuman oppressors with tokens of his just displeasure. How striking and touching is his tender regard for the inferior race as exhibited in his word!—"You shall not muzzle the ox when he treads out the corn." "You shall not see your brother's donkey or his ox fall down by the way, and hide yourself from them. You shall surely help them, to lift them up again." "You open your hand and supply the needs of every living thing." "He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens when they cry." The regard which we pay to the brute creation must always

be considered a test of disposition and character. "A righteous man regards the life of his beast." No individual can be trusted for his humane feeling to his own species who is not humane in his feelings towards the inferior tribes. It is recorded, that when an ancient senate of the Areopagites were assembled in the open air, a small bird, to escape a larger one of prey, took refuge in the bosom of one of the senators, who, being of a cruel disposition, hurled it from him so rudely, that he killed it. On which the senate instantly banished him from their presence, declaring that he who was destitute of humanity, even to a helpless and confiding bird, was unworthy the honor of a seat in their body. An indulged propensity, of cruelty to insects, or larger animals, as Hogarth has finely illustrated, has often ended in the perpetration of crimes of the deepest dye. Those who have wantonly sported with life in inferior creatures, have come to sport with life in beings of a higher and nobler order. The author, then, as man is, of all the evil which affects the irrational world, let us learn to sympathize with its sufferings, and its travail; and thus lessen, and soothe, and hush, as far as God gives us influence and power, the curse we entailed, the pang we inflicted, and the sign we awoke.

Sad as is this picture of a suffering creation, dark and gloomy as is its coloring, it is not without its bright and cheering hues. Hope casts upon the somber canvas a strong and steady light. The Bible teaches that there is coming a day—oh, speed its dawning!—of millennial blessedness, when peace and repose shall be restored to this disordered world, and the groaning of the creation shall cease, its sighs be hushed, and its sufferings be terminated forever. When that period arrives we are told that the "In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard and the goat will be at peace. Calves and yearlings will be safe among lions, and a little child will lead them all. The cattle will graze among bears. Cubs and calves will lie down together. And lions will eat grass as the livestock do. Babies will crawl safely among poisonous snakes. Yes, a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes and pull it out unharmed. Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain. And as the waters fill the sea, so the earth will be filled with people who know the Lord." Isaiah 11:6-9. Then when the Restorer of all things shall come, there will be a "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." Such is the beautiful light with which this dark picture is clothed. Let us pray for its coming, and instrumentally hasten its approach; remembering that the world is to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord through the sanctified agency of the church.

## **CHAPTER 21.**

### **"The First-fruits of the Spirit, a Pledge Of the Full Redemption"**

**And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. Romans 8:23**

**Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. Romans 8:23**

**And even we Christians, although we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, also groan to be released from pain and suffering. We, too, wait anxiously for that day when God will give us our full rights as his children, including the new bodies he has promised us. Romans 8:23**

**From his natural and impressive digression, the Apostle again returns to the *renewed creature* of whom he had previously been speaking. Having adverted to the suffering of the whole animate creation, he proceeds to show that this condition was not peculiar or solitary—that not only in the heart of the irrational creature, but even in the heart of the renewed Christian there were the intense throbbings of a woe, and the deep groanings of a burden, from which it sighed and hoped to be delivered. Let us take each section in its order, of this remarkable passage.**

**"Ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit." It had been the earnest aim of the Apostle broadly and distinctly to draw the great line of demarcation between the state of nature and the state of grace. What distinctive feature more illustrative of the Christian character could he have selected than this. "Who have the first-fruits of the Spirit." The figurative allusion is to a familiar law of the Jewish economy. It will be recollected that, under the Levitical dispensation, the Lord commanded that the first-fruits, in the form of a single sheaf, should be sickled, and waved before him by the priest; and that this wave-offering was to be considered as constituting the herald or the pledge of a ripened and full harvest. And not only should it be an earnest and a pledge, but it should represent the nature and character of the fruit which, before long, in luxuriant abundance would crowd with its golden sheaves, and amid shouts of gladness, the swelling garner. When, therefore, it is said that believers in Jesus have the "first-fruits of the Spirit,"**

the meaning clearly is, that they have such communications of the Spirit now, as are a pledge and foretaste of what they shall possess and enjoy in the great day of the coming glory. "In whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." We remark, in general terms, that if we are believers, then we are partakers of that grace which is the earnest of glory. Do we partake of the grace of life? It is the same life which beats in the souls of the glorified. In us its pulsations are faint and fluctuating; in them they are deep and unfluttering—yet the life is the same. And if we have the Spirit of life dwelling in us now, then have we the first-fruits of the life which is to come. Have we the Spirit of adoption? What is it but the earnest and the seal of our certain reception into our Father's house? The love to God which overflows our hearts, the yearnings of those hearts to be at home, are the first-fruits of our consummated and glorified sonship. Thus might we travel the entire circle of the Christian graces which go to form, sanctify, and adorn the Christian character, illustrating the truth, that *each grace wrought by the Spirit in the heart on earth is the germ of glory in heaven, and that the perfection of glory will be the perfection of each grace.* The present character and tutelage of the child of God are preparatory to a higher state of being—yes, it is an essential part of that being itself. Oh, it is a holy and inspiriting thought, that every development of grace, and every aspiration of holiness, and every victory of faith, and every achievement of prayer, and every gleam of joy in the soul here below, is the earnest-sheaf of the golden ears of happiness and glory garnered for the saints on high. "He that goes forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless return again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him."

"Even we ourselves groan within ourselves." In these words the expectant of glory is represented as sympathizing, in a certain degree, with the general condition of present misery, and expectation of future good. But we must distinguish the emotion here described, from the somewhat kindred depression beneath which the whole creation is bowed. It is the groaning of those who have the "first-fruits of the Spirit"—consequently it is the emotion of a living soul. In the one case, the groaning is the throb and the throe of death; in the other case it is the evidence and the breathing of life.

To what causes may it be traced? We groan within ourselves on account of sin—its innate principle, and its practical outbreakings. Over what do our tears flow the bitterest and the fastest? The winged riches? The heart's treasure wrenched from our grasp by ruthless death, and which the cruel

grave has hid from our view? Ah, no! but the sin which lays us in penitence and grief at the Savior's feet, with David's confession and prayer breathing from our lips—"Against you, you only, have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight." Oh, what a mercy to know that the "sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: that a broken and contrite heart he will not despise!"

There is also the groaning arising from external trial. Of this cup, which all alike drink, none quaff so deeply as those to whom are imparted the "first-fruits of the Spirit." The path of sorrow is the path to glory, and the "bread and the water of affliction" is the food of all the "prisoners of hope." But spring from what cause it may, this groaning of the servants of God confirms the affecting truth, that the believer possesses but the "first-fruits of the Spirit;" and that, consequently, his present condition, being one of but *partial sanctification*, must of necessity be one of but *limited happiness*. And yet we would not fail to remind the reader of the truth, that the deeper his sanctification the keener will be his sense of indwelling corruption, and the heavier his groaning because of it. So that, so long as he is still the tenant of a tabernacle of sin and death—an unwilling subject of vanity—and so long as he grows in grace, he will "groan being burdened," and will the more deeply sigh, and the more intensely long for the uncaging of his spirit, that frees him entirely forever from its oppressiveness and its thralldom.

But, oh, there is *music* in the groaning of those who have the "first-fruits of the Spirit!" The chain they wear is not the manacle of a slave of sin, shaking his galling fetters in deep and dark despair. The captivity that confines him, is not the subjection of a voluntary vassal of Satan, crouching beneath the burden, and trembling at the lash of a hard task master. Oh, no! it is the sensibility, the consciousness, the groaning of the Christian. It tells of the Spirit's indwelling. It betokens the hope of glory. Those inward heavings of the soul are the pantings of a life divine; those deep groanings of the heart are the muffled chimings of heaven. They are the indices of a nature which God will before long lift to its native home; they are the discordant notes of an anthem, which soon will fill heaven with its swelling and entrancing music.

"Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." The terms "adoption," "redemption," must here be taken in a restricted sense. Our present *adoption* into God's family is as perfect as God can make it. We shall not in reality be more the children of God in heaven than we are now. Dwell upon this truth, beloved. Press it in faith and gladness to your sighing, groaning heart. Is God's hand uplifted? Oh, tremble not! It is a Father's hand.

Say not that it presses heavily upon you—it is the pressure of love. Oh, think not that there is one throb of affection less towards you in his heart. "Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God," and all the immunities and blessings of a present sonship are ours. Equally as complete is our *redemption* from all that can condemn. When Jesus exclaimed, "It is finished!" by one offering he perfected forever the salvation of his church. Then did he entirely roll away the curse from his people. Then did he hurl their sins into an infinite depth. Then did he complete the work the Father gave him to do. For the finishing of that work, thanks be to God, the saints do not "wait"!

And still, all believers are the expectants of an "adoption" to be confirmed, and of a "redemption" to be perfected. Their adoption now is concealed, their adoption then will be visible. Their present adoption is limited in its privileges—their future adoption will introduce them to all the riches of their inheritance and to all the splendors of their Father's house. For this unveiled, this manifest, this full adoption they are "waiting." And so, too, of "redemption." The ransom price is paid, but the body is not yet fully redeemed. It still is fettered, and cribbed, and cabined by a thousand clinging corruptions and infirmities. But the day of its complete redemption draws near. In virtue of its ransom it will spring from the dust, its last link of corruption entirely and forever dissolved. "But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. He will take these weak mortal bodies of ours and change them into glorious bodies like his own." Philip. 3:20-21. Like unto Christ's glorious body! Oh, then, no deformity will mar its symmetry! no infirmity will impair its strength! no sickness, no faintings, no nervousness, no pangs of suffering or throes of death will ever assail and torment it more! For this "redemption of the body" the sons of God are waiting. Our heavenly Father has adopted it. Our divine Savior has redeemed it. The Holy Spirit, our Comforter, has sealed it. Oh, yes! The first-fruits of the "first resurrection" bloom on the grave of the holy dead. Plant not above their heads the flowers that fade. There are flowers blooming there, plucked from the amaranthine bowers of immortality, and they will never die.

This page may arrest the eye of a sufferer, not soothed in his grief, or cheered in his loneliness by such prospects as these. There is coming a day when the *irrational creation*, of whom we have been speaking, will suffer no more. "The spirit of a beast goes downwards." But no such annihilation awaits *suffering man*. Oh, melancholy condition! Oh, dreary prospect! Suffering in this life, and suffering in the life to come! to pass from a fire that is temporary, to a fire

that is eternal—from the agonies and throes of the first death, to the power and the pangs of the second! But there still is hope. Jesus died for sinners, and there is mercy even for the chief. Blessed suffering, hallowed sorrow, if now, in the agony of your grief, you are led to the Savior to learn, what in the sunny hour of prosperity and gladness you refused to learn—that God only can make you happy, and that God in Christ is prepared to make you happy. Oh, heaven-sent affliction! sweet messenger of love! beautiful in your somber robes, bearing to my soul a blessing so divine, so precious as this!

Have you the "first-fruits of the Spirit?" Guard them with tender, sleepless care. Nature in her richest domain yields no such fruits or flowers as these. Employ all the means and appliances within your reach to keep verdant and fruitful the sacred garden of your soul. Unveil it to the sun's light, to the gentle showers, and the soft gales of heaven. Let your incessant prayer be, "Awake, O north wind; and come, you south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits."

Oh, guard those precious "first-fruits!" Soon the glory they foreshadow will be revealed. The autumnal tints are deepening, the golden ears are ripening, the reaper's sickle is preparing, and before long we shall join in the song of the angels' harvest-home, "Grace, grace unto it!"

## **CHAPTER 22.**

### **"Saved by Hope"**

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Romans 8:24-25

For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. Romans 8:24-25

Now that we are saved, we eagerly look forward to this freedom. For if you already have something, you don't need to hope for it. But if we look forward to something we don't have yet, we must wait patiently and confidently. Romans 8:24-25

We have been contemplating the present state of the renewed creature as one rather of *expectancy* than of *attainment*—not of *realization*, but of *hope*. We have seen him in his lofty position, as he stands in Christ Jesus, towering above the storm and thundercloud of sin, the curse and condemnation, tinted with the first beams of opening day, and waving the first golden sheaves of the ripening harvest. The description and the argument now approach their climax. As if these trembling rays and these first-fruits might fail to assure the believing heart of the certain day, and the actual harvest, our Apostle, in yet strongest language, meets the misgiving, and quells the fear, by declaring that we are "saved by hope." Affirming this, he then proceeds tenderly to exhort the believer to a patient waiting its certain and full realization. There are, in these passages, some points of the deepest interest. May the Holy Spirit unfold and apply them!

"We are saved by hope." The phrase, as employed by the Apostle, does not imply the instrument by which we are saved, but *the condition in which we are saved*. The condition of the renewed creature is one of hope. Salvation by the atonement of Christ—faith, and not hope, being the instrument of its appropriation—is a complete and finished thing. We cannot give this truth a prominence too great, nor enforce it with an earnestness too intense. We cannot keep our eye too exclusively or too intently fixed on Jesus. All salvation is in him—all salvation proceeds from him—all salvation leads to him, and for the assurance and comfort of our salvation we are to repose believingly and entirely on him. Christ must be all. Christ the beginning— Christ the center—and Christ the end. Oh, blessed truth to you who sigh and mourn over the unveiled abominations that crowd and darken the chamber of imagery! Oh, sweet truth to you who are sensible of your poverty, and vileness, and insufficiency, and the ten thousand flaws and failures of which, perhaps, no one is cognizant but God and your own soul! Oh, to turn and rest in Christ—a full Christ—a loving Christ—a tender Christ, whose heart's love never chills, from whose eye darts no reproof, from whose lips breathes no sentence of condemnation! But as it regards the complete effects of this salvation in those who are saved, it is yet *future*. It is the "hope laid up for us in heaven." It would seem utterly incompatible with the present economy that the renewed creature should be in any other condition than one of *hopeful expectation*. The constitution towards which he tends, the holiness for which he looks, the bliss for which he pants, and the dignity to which he aspires, could not for a moment exist in the atmosphere by which he is here begirt. His state must of necessity be one of hope, and that hope must of necessity link us with the

distant and mysterious future. The idea, "saved by hope," is illustrated by the *effects of Christian hope*. It is that divine emotion which buoys up the soul amid the conflicts, the trials, and the vicissitudes of the present life. So that we are cheered and sustained, or 'saved' from sinking amid the billows, by the 'hope' of certain deliverance and a complete redemption. "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began."

The Christian's state, then, is one of hope. Around this single subject how much of Scripture light gathers! A remarkable reference to it is found in these words of the Apostle, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit." Well might Tertullian exclaim in view of a passage so rich as this, "I adore the fullness of the Scriptures." God is here portrayed as the "God of hope." What a glorious title! The believer is then described as the subject of hope—what a blissful being! We are then exhorted to abound in hope—what a precious privilege! This magnificent bow spans the whole horizon of our splendid future. We do not yet realize our heaven but we hope for it. We do not yet see Jesus—but we hope to see him. We do not yet exult in our emancipation from corruption—but we hope to be free. We do not yet drink of the river of pleasure that is at God's right hand, nor bathe in the sea of glory that rolls around the throne—but we hope to do. "We hope for that we see not." But what is the character, and what the foundation of Christian hope?

It is emphatically a "good hope." In every point of view it sustains this scripture character. The hope of heaven fostered by an unrenewed mind is baseless and illusory. There exists not a single element of goodness in its nature. It is the conception of a mind at enmity against God. It is the delusion of a heart in covenant with death, and in agreement with hell. It is the inspiration of the wind. It is the night-vision that plays around the slumbering pillow. It is the meteor-light that flashes upon the tomb. It is the treacherous beacon that decoys the too confiding but deluded voyager to the rock-bound shore. Unscriptural, unreal, and baseless, it must eventually cover its possessor with shame and confusion of face. But not such is the believer's hope. Begotten with his second nature—the in-breathing of the Spirit of God—an element of the renewed mind, and based upon the atonement of the Savior, it must be essentially a good hope. Cleansed from moral impurity, not in the laver of baptism, but with the blood of Christ; justified, not by the ritual of Moses, but by the righteousness of the Incarnate God; sanctified, not by sacramental grace, falsely so called, but by the indwelling of the Holy

**Spirit—the believer's hope of heaven is as well founded as the throne of the Eternal. Moreover, it is "a good hope *through grace*." The first and the last lesson we learn in our Christian course is, that "by grace we are saved." Lord! do you require of me one thought of stainless purity, one throb of perfect love, one deed of unsullied holiness, upon which shall hinge my everlasting happiness? Then am I lost forever! But since you have provided a Righteousness that justifies me from all things, that frees me from all condemnation—and since this righteousness is your free, unpurchased gift, the bestowment of sovereign grace, I clasp to my trembling yet believing heart the joyous hope this truth inspires. It is a *blessed* hope. "Looking for that blessed hope." Its object is most blessed. The heaven it compasses is that blissful place where the holy ones who have fled from our embrace are reposing in the bosom of the Savior. They are the blessed dead. The day of their death was to them better than the day of their birth. The one was the introduction to all sorrow, the other is a translation to all joy. Blessed hope! the hope of being forever with the Lord. No more to grieve the Spirit that so often and so soothingly comforted our hearts; no more to wound the gentle bosom that so often pillowed our head. No more to journey in darkness, nor bend as a bruised reed before each blast of temptation. To be a pillar in the temple of God, to go no more out forever.**

**And what a *sanctifying* hope is it! This, to the spiritual mind, is its most acceptable and elevating feature. "Every man that has this hope in him purifies himself even as he is pure." It detaches from earth, and allures to heaven. Never does it glow more brightly in the soul, nor kindle around the path a luster more heavenly, than when it strengthens in the believer a growing conformity of character to that heaven towards which it expands its wings and soars.**

**It is, in a word, a *sure* hope. Shall the worm undermine it? shall the tempest shake it? shall the waters extinguish it? Never. It saves us. It keeps, preserves, and sustains us amid the perils and depressions of our earthly pilgrimage. And having borne in through the flood, it will not fail us when the last surge lands us upon the shore of eternity. "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil, where the Forerunner has for us entered, even Jesus." "Therefore do we with patience wait for it." This is our true posture—a patient waiting its fruition. This grace is called the "patience of hope." "We**

through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." We wait the Bridegroom's coming. We wait the descent of the chariot. We wait the Father's summons to our home. We wait the Master's call to our rest. We wait the uncaging of the spirit, that it may fly. *The desire to depart is ardent, but patient. The longing to be with Christ is deep, but submissive.* For the full realization of a hope so sublime, so precious, and so sure, we can patiently wait. The theater of suffering is the school of patience: "And patience works experience, and experience hope;" and hope in the depth of the trial, and in the heat of the battle, looks forward to the joy of deliverance, and to the spoils of victory. It is well remarked by Calvin, that "God never calls his children to a triumph until he has exercised them in the warfare of suffering." Thus *all who shall eventually wear the palm, must now wield the sword.* For the consummation of this hope, then, let us diligently labor, meekly suffer, and patiently wait. Living beneath the cross, looking unto Jesus, toiling for Jesus, testifying for Jesus, and cultivating conformity to Jesus, let us "be always ready to give a reason of the hope that is in us;" and be always ready to enter into the joy and fruition of that hope, the substance and security of which is—"Christ in you the hope of glory."

## **CHAPTER 23.**

### **"The Sympathy of the Spirit with the Infirmary of Prayer"**

"Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Romans 8:26

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. Romans 8:26

And the Holy Spirit helps us in our distress. For we don't even know what we should pray for, nor how we should pray. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. Romans 8:26

The condition of the Church of God has ever been one of weakness and infirmity. Her brightest and palmiest days were the first and the earliest of her history. Yet no sooner were the saints of God gathered into Christian communities, and planted as churches in each province, and in every land, than the infirmity of the body began to appear, in the heresies, divisions, and

parties which sprung up, while yet the Apostles lived to intercede for them with their prayers, and to teach and admonish them by their epistles. From that period until now, the history of the church of God has presented an unbroken chain of evidence to the truth of the same affecting fact. A body yet but *partially renewed*, a church but *imperfectly sanctified*, it must of necessity be so. But let us leave the consideration of the church as a society, and contemplate it in its individual relation. Each member of that church is the subject of infirmity. It were marvellous were it not so. We have seen that the present condition of the believer is a state of vanity. That it is one of hope rather than of realization. Binding in his bosom the green *first fruits* of glory, there yet cling to him a thousand grievous infirmities, the sighs of which, the foretastes of heaven cannot stifle. Encompassed with infirmities, weary and heavy laden, he journeys homeward, amid the fluctuations of hope and fear, joy and sorrow; sometimes foiled, then overcoming; often mourning, and anon praising; yet ever deeply conscious that the present home of his renewed and heavenly nature is a body of humiliation and death—constituting a perpetual and oppressive clog to the heaven-ascending tendency of his sanctified affections. But we need not extend our classification. The infirmities of the believer are as *varied* as they are numerous. Some are weak in faith, and are always questioning their interest in Christ. Some, superficial in knowledge, and shallow in experience, and are ever exposed to the crudities of error, and to the assaults of temptation. Some are slow travelers in the divine life, and are always in the rear; while yet others are often ready to halt altogether. Then there are others who groan beneath the burden of bodily infirmity, exerting a morbid influence upon their spiritual experience. A nervous temperament—a state of perpetual depression and despondency—the constant corrodings of mental disquietude—physical ailment—imaginary forebodings—a facile yielding to temptation—petulance of spirit—unguardedness of speech—gloomy interpretations of providence—an eye that only views the dark hues of the cloud, the somber shadings of the picture. Ah! from this dismal catalogue how many, making their selection, may exclaim, "This is any infirmity!" But be that infirmity what it may, let it endear to our hearts the grace and sympathy of Him who for our sake was encompassed with infirmity, that he might have compassion upon those who are alike begirt. All the fullness of grace that is in Jesus is for that single infirmity over which you sigh.

But it is one specific infirmity of the Christian to which the passage restricts our attention—the infirmity of PRAYER. Of this, all the children of God in different degrees partake. A more holy and solemn engagement enlists not the

thoughts, and feelings, and time of the believer, than the engagement of PRAYER. In proportion, then, to the spirituality of a duty will be its keen sense of the opposition it meets from either the mental or physical frailties which encompass the Christian.

The Apostle thus defines this infirmity—"We know not what we should pray for as we ought." How shall we describe it? With what feature shall we begin? There is first the difficulty which some feel in reference to *the nature of prayer*. Simple as prayer is, we see how even an apostle could be perplexed, for lie. includes himself in this general description of the saints. Three times did he urge a petition the granting of which would have proved a curse rather than a blessing. "What am I to pray for?" is the earnest inquiry of some. "Am I to limit my requests in petitioning for spiritual blessings, and may I include in my petitions blessings that are temporal?" "And what is real prayer?" is the yet more earnest question of another. "I fear mine is not true prayer. May I characterize by such a holy and significant term the cold effusions of my closet, the feeble ejaculations of the wayside, the wandering devotions of the sanctuary, the moanings of a spirit wounded, the sighs of a heart oppressed, the upward glancings of a mind beclouded, the breathings of a soul whose spiritual exercises are at times so opposite and contradictory? Is this prayer?"

And, then, there is the infirmity of *the act of prayer*. The vagrancy of thought—the coldness of affection the intrusion of low cares—the consciousness of unreal petitions, of unfelt confessions, of undesired desires, the felt oppressiveness of a distasteful task, rather than the felt luxury of a precious privilege—the slovenliness of the performance—the little solemnity of mind—all mark the infirmity which attaches to this transcendently spiritual employment.

Then as to *the mode of prayer*; this also is felt to be a source of painful embarrassment by some. There are many Christians who find it difficult, if not impossible to give expression to the heart's utterances, in what is termed free prayer. Compelled, through an infirmity they cannot conquer, to restrict themselves to a liturgical form of devotion, while others pour out their souls to God in unfettered breathings, in unrestricted communion, they are, at times, perplexed to know whether they are acquainted with the reality and power of true prayer. And thus many a saint of God, whose needs are not the less real, whose desires are not the less spiritual, and whose breathings are not the less fervent and divinely acceptable, may, through this his infirmity, be much cast down and discouraged. But who, whatever be his mode of prayer, is free from

some clinging infirmity, interfering with the sanctity and power of this hallowed engagement? Who is not mournfully sensible, that of all his spiritual privileges, this, his highest, most sacred, and solemn, is the most encompassed with, and marred and fettered by, the deep corruptions of his fallen and depraved nature? That after all his rigid observance of the duty, his many devotional engagements, public and private, there should yet be so little felt nearness to God, so little confidential communion—in a word, so little real prayer. Oh, how much prayerless prayer do we have to mourn over! How little brokenness of heart; how little sense of sin; how faint a taking hold of the atoning blood; how imperfect a realization of God's relation to us as a Father; how little faith in his promise to hear, in his ability to aid, in his readiness to bless us! Such are some of the many infirmities associated with prayer.

But there is encouragement—let us contemplate it. "Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities." The word here rendered "helps," properly means to take part with. It implies, not merely sympathy, with, but a personal participation in our infirmity. The Spirit helps our infirmities by sharing them with us. Now take the general infirmities of the believer—infirmities which, unaided by another and a superior power, must crush and overwhelm—and trace the help thus afforded by the Spirit. We are taught to adore the love of the Father, from where each rill of mercy has its rise. We delight to dwell upon the love of the Son, through whose channel all redemption—blessing flows. And shall we overlook the love of the Holy Spirit? Shall we forget his affection, his grace, his succourings? Forbid it, eternal and blessed Spirit! Your, essential Deity—your personal subsistence—your tender love—your Divine power—your efficacious grace—your sovereign mercy—your infinite patience—your exquisite sympathy—all demand our deepest love, and awake our loftiest praise. But how is this sympathy of the Spirit expressed? Seeing the soul bound with an infirmity, all his compassion is awakened. Approaching, he takes hold of the burden. Constrained by a love which no thought can conceive, moved by a tenderness no tongue can describe, he advances, and places the power of his Godhead beneath the pressure—and thus he helps our infirmity. Do you doubt this? We summon *you* as a witness to its truth. Why are you not a ruin and a wreck? Why has not your infirmity long since dethroned reason, and annihilated faith, and extinguished hope, and clad all the future with the pall of despair? Why, have you ridden serene and secure upon the crest of the billow, smiling calmly upon the dark and yawning surges dashing and foaming around you? Why have you, when your heart has been overwhelmed, found relief in a sigh, in a tear, in an uplifted glance, in one thought of God?

**Oh, it has been because the Spirit, all silent and invisible, was near to you, sympathizing, helping, bearing your infirmities. Because around you the power of his Deity was placed. And when you have staggered, and turned pale, and have well near given up all for lost, resigning yourself to the broodings of despair, that Spirit has approached, all-loving and powerful, and helped, by sharing your infirmity. Some appropriate and precious promise has been sealed upon your heart—some clear and soothing view of Christ has been presented to your eye—some gentle whisper of love has breathed upon your ear—and you have been helped. The pressure has been lightened, the grief has been assuaged, the weakness has been strengthened, and you have risen superior to the infirmity that bowed you to the dust. Oh, it was the Spirit that helped you. Grieved, and wounded, and slighted a thousand times over though he has been, receiving at your hands the unkindest requital for the tenderest love, yet when your infirmity bowed you to the earth, and the sword entered your soul, he drew near, forgetting all your base ingratitude, and administered wine to your dejected spirit and oil to your bleeding wound, and placed beneath you the encircling arms of his everlasting love.**

**But we are yet to contemplate the aid afforded by the Spirit in the especial infirmity of prayer.**

**"We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." The Holy Spirit is here represented in the character of a pleader, or advocate for the saints. To form a vivid conception of this truth, we have but to imagine an anxious and embarrassed client prosecuting some important suit, or, perchance, battling for his life in a court of justice. At his side stands his counselor, thoroughly acquainted with the nature of his case, and deeply versed in the bearings of the law. He is there to instruct the suppliant how to shape his course, with what arguments to support, with what pleas to urge, with what words to clothe his suit. Such is the advocacy and such the aid of the Spirit in the matter of prayer. We stand in the presence of the Lord—it may be to deprecate a deserved punishment, or to plead for a needed blessing. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought." How shall we order our cause before the Great Judge? With what feelings, with what language, with what arguments shall we unburden our heart, unveil our sorrow, confess our sin, and make known our request? How overcome the remembrance of past ingratitude, and the conviction of present guilt, and the pressure of deep neediness, and the overwhelming sense of the Divine Majesty? How wake the heart to feeling, how rouse the dull, sluggish emotions of the soul, how recall**

the truant affections, and how concentrate the mind upon the holy and awesome engagement? But our Counselor is there!

"The Spirit itself makes intercession for us." And how does he this? He indites the prayer. Think not that that spiritual petition which breathed from your lips and rose as an incense-cloud before the mercy-seat was other than the inditing of the Holy Spirit. He inspired that prayer, he created those desires, and he awoke those groanings. The form of your petition may have been ungraceful—your language simple, your sentences broken, your accents tremulous, yet was there an eloquence and a power in that prayer which reached the heart and moved the arm of God. It overcame the Angel of the Covenant. And whose eloquence and whose power was it? The interceding Spirit. He also teaches us *what to pray for*. Many and urgent as our needs are, we only accurately know them as the Spirit makes them known. Alas, what profound ignorance of ourselves must we cherish when we know not what we should ask God for as we ought! But the Spirit reveals our deep necessity, convinces us of our emptiness, poverty, and need, and teaches us what blessings to ask, what evils to deprecate, what mercies to implore. He sympathizes, too, with our infirmity in prayer, *by portraying to our view the parental character of God*. Sealing on our hearts a sense of adoption, he emboldens us to approach God with filial love and child-like confidence. He leads us to God as a Father. Nor must we overlook the skill with which the Spirit enables us to urge in our approaches to God the sinner's great plea—the atoning blood of Jesus. This is no small part of the divine aid we receive in our infirmity. Satan, the accuser of the saints, even follows the believer to the throne of grace to confront and confound him there. When Joshua stood before the Angel of the Lord, Satan stood at his right hand to resist him. But the Spirit, too, is there! He is there in the character and to discharge the office of the praying soul's Intercessor. He instructs the accused suppliant what arguments to use, what pleas to urge, and how to resist the devil. He strengthens the visual organ of the soul so that it clearly discerns the blood upon the mercy-seat within the veil, on which it fixes the eye in simple faith. Oh, it is the delight of the Spirit to take of the things of Jesus—his love, his work, his sympathy, his grace, his power—and show them to the soul prostrate in prayer before the throne of grace.

Thus does the Spirit "make intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." These groanings are those of the believer, yet inspired by the Spirit. They are the inarticulate utterances of a heart overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. No language can adequately express them. They "cannot be

uttered." It is the soul's hidden communion with God. No, it is possible that even to the petitioner himself these groanings present but vague and indefinite conceptions of the heart's deep desires, of the soul's yet deeper needs. He is conscious of a need, but he can scarcely define its nature, or suggest its supply. He is sensible of a lack, but what it is, or how it may be met, he is perplexed to know. He inwardly, deeply groans, but these emotions utter a language which even he cannot interpret. But there is One who can. Be that need, be that lack what it may, Christ knows it, Christ sympathizes with it, Christ meets it. He in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, is prepared to supply all our need. There rises not a groan of the Spirit from the soul of a sinner, the meaning of which God cannot understand, and the prayer of which God will not answer. To the soul who breathes it, it may appear, as were many of the predictions of the ancient prophets, unintelligible and meaningless; yet, like those prophetic utterances, they have a sense and a language clear and articulate to Him who inspired them. Oh blessed, eloquent groanings in the heart of a poor sinner, which human words fail to utter! God hears them—Jesus understands them—the Spirit creates them—and not one shall be uttered in vain. Whether it be the groaning from a pressure of sin, or from a sense of desire, or from a conviction of need, or from the smiting hand of God himself, that groaning ascends to heaven, and bears to the throne of the Eternal, whose ear bends to the softest whisper, and hearkens to the gentlest sigh of his child, a confession, or a request, which shall not be unheard, unheeded, or forgotten.

In conclusion, overlook not the fitness of the Lord Jesus to meet all the infirmities of his people. There are two touching and expressive passages bearing on this point. "He himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses." Wondrous view of the Incarnate God! That very infirmity; Christian reader, which now bows you to the earth, by reason of which you can in no wise lift up yourself, your Savior bore. Is it sin? is it sorrow? is it sickness? is it need? It bowed him to the dust, and brought the crimson drops to his brow. And is this no consolation? Does it not make your infirmity even pleasant, to remember that Jesus once bore it, and in sympathy bears it still? The other passage is—"We have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Touched with my infirmity! What a thought! I reveal my grief to my friend. I discern the emotions of his soul, I mark the trembling lip, the sympathizing look, the moistened eye—my friend is touched with my sorrow. But oh, what is this sympathy—tender, soothing, grateful as it is—compared to the sympathy with which the great High Priest in heaven enters into my case, is moved with my grief, is touched with the

feeling of my infirmity?

Let us learn more tenderly to sympathize with the infirmities of our brethren. "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." Oh for more of this primitive Christianity! The infirmity of a Christian brother should, by a heartfelt sympathy, become in a measure our own. We ought to bear it. The rule of our conduct towards him should be the rule of our conduct towards our own selves. Who would feel bound or disposed to travel from house to house, proclaiming with trumpet tongue and with evident satisfaction his own weaknesses, failings, and infirmities? To God we may confess them, but no divine precept enjoins their confession to man. We unveil them to his eye, and he kindly and graciously veils them from all human eyes. Be this our spirit and our conduct towards a weak and erring brother. Let us rather part with our right hand than publish his infirmity to others, and thus wound the Head by an unkind and unholy exposure of the faults and frailties of a member of his body, and by so doing cause the enemies of Christ to blaspheme that worthy name by which we are called.

Honor and glorify the Spirit who thus so graciously and so kindly sympathizes with our infirmities. Pay to him divine worship, yield to him divine homage, and let your unreserved obedience to his commands, and your jealous regard for his honor, and your faithful hearkening to the gentle accents of his "still, small voice" manifest how deeply sensible you are of his love, his grace, and faithfulness in sympathizing with your sorrows, in supplying your need, and in making your burdens and infirmities all and entirely his own.

## **CHAPTER 24.**

### **"The Intercession of the Spirit in the Saints"**

And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.  
Romans 8:27

And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. Romans 8:27

And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. Romans 8:27

**We are here presented with another and a deeper unfolding of the work of the Spirit in relation to prayer. Having shown to us in what way he aids the infirmity of this holy exercise, chiefly by imparting the spirit of grace and of supplication, the Apostle now reminds us *how those inditings, thus originating with the Holy Spirit, are in perfect harmony with the will of God.* The whole subject is based upon one of the most solemn views of the Divine Being presented in the Bible. Having contemplated this, we shall then proceed to open up the Spirit's work of intercession in the saints.**

**"He that searches the hearts." This is, and this only can be, the prerogative of God. It is not in the power of man or angel to look within the human heart. It is the awfully solemn prerogative of God only. Thus is the truth declared: "The Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord knows the heart." "The Lord searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts." "The refining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the Lord tries the hearts." And what a solemn declaration of this truth is put forth by the prophet Jeremiah! "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins." With a most emphatic enunciation of this truth does the sacred canon of Scripture close: "And all the churches shall know that I am he who searches the reins and hearts and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." We find the same divine prerogative ascribed to the Lord Jesus, thus forming one of the strongest evidences of his essential Deity: "Then there arose a reasoning among those who of them should be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him." Again, "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men. And needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man." How could Jesus perceive the thoughts of their heart, and how could he know what was in man—what thoughts were revolving, what schemes were planning, what intrigues were plotting in the deep recesses of the soul, were he not absolutely God? But solemn as is this view of the Divine character, the believing mind finds in it sweet and hallowed repose. What more consolatory truth, in some of the most trying positions of a child of God, than this—the Lord knows the heart? The world condemns, and the saints judge—but God knows the heart. And to those who have been led into deep discoveries of the heart's hidden evil, to whom have been made unveilings startling and distressing, how precious is this character of God—"he that searches the heart!" Is there a single recess of our hearts we would veil from his penetrating glance? Is there a corruption**

we would hide from his view? Is there an evil of which we would have him ignorant? Oh no! Mournful and humiliating as is the spectacle, we would throw open every door, and uplift every window, and invite and urge his scrutiny and inspection, making no concealments, and indulging in no reserves, and framing no excuses when dealing with the great Searcher of hearts—exclaiming, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." And while the Lord is thus acquainted with the evil of our hearts, he most graciously conceals that evil from the eyes of others. He seems to say, by his benevolent conduct, "I see my child's infirmity"—then covering it with his hand, exclaims—"but no other eye shall see it but my own!" Oh, the touching tenderness, the loving-kindness of our God! Knowing, as he does, all the evil of our nature, he yet veils that evil from human eye, that others may not despise us as we often despise ourselves. Who but God could know it—who but God would conceal it? And how blessed, too, to remember that while God knows all the *evil*, he is as intimately acquainted with all the *good* that is in the hearts of his people! He knows all that his Spirit has implanted, that his grace has wrought. Oh, encouraging truth! That spark of love, faint and flickering—that pulsation of life, low and tremulous—that touch of faith, feeble and hesitating, that groan, that sigh, that low thought of self that leads a man to seek the shade, that self-abasement that places his mouth in the dust, oh, not one of these sacred emotions is unseen, unnoticed, by God! His eye ever rests with infinite complaisance and delight on his own image in the renewed soul. Listen to his language to David: "Forasmuch as it was in your heart to build a house for my name, you did well, in that it was in your heart."

"Knows what is the mind of the Spirit." It would appear by these words, that in prayer the great interpreter of the heart is the Spirit. And when it is declared that our Father in heaven knows what is the mind of the Spirit, it means that he is essentially acquainted with all the inditings and breathings of the Spirit in the heart. With what powerful and irresistible attractions does this truth invest the throne of grace! To remember that in prayer we draw near to that God who knows all the desires of the heart, which, though they be clothed with no diction, and are inarticulate in their accents, are yet known to, and understood by, him. Yes, before that thought is conceived, or that feeling is inspired, and when actually conceived and inspired, is, perhaps, to us confused, and indefinite, and meaningless, leaving nothing to repose in but the bare consciousness of sincere desire and real earnestness; yet he who knows what is the mind of the Spirit, understands it altogether. To him it has a voice,

to him a language, and to him a meaning. He knows the mind of the Spirit in his saints. Oh, sweet encouragement to prayer! It is not your voice that speaks, but the Spirit's, when you draw near to God.

"Because he makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God." We are wont to read in the Bible of one Intercessor, and of one advocacy. "There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." But the believer has two courts with which prayer has to do. In the court below, where prayer is offered, the Spirit is his Intercessor. In the court above, where prayer is presented, Jesus is his Intercessor. Then, what an honored, what a privileged man is the praying man! On earth—the lower court—he has a Counselor instructing him for what he should pray, and how he should order his suit. In heaven—the higher court—he has an Advocate presenting to God each petition as it ascends, separating from it all that is ignorant, and sinful, and weak, and pleading for its gracious acceptance, and asking for its full bestowment. Here, then, is our vast encouragement in prayer. The inditings of the Spirit—the Intercessor on earth—are always in agreement with the mind of God. In prayer we need just such a Divine counselor. Is it *temporal blessing* that we crave? We need to be taught how to graduate our request to our necessity, and how to shape our necessity to our heavenly calling. Supplication for temporal good is, we think, limited. And this is the limit: "Having food and clothing, let us therewith be content." What child of God is warranted in asking worldly wealth, or distinction, or rank? And what child of God, in a healthy state of soul, would ask them? "But," says the Apostle, "my God shall supply all your needs, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Should God, in his providence, send either of these temporal things undesired, unasked, and unexpected, receive it as from him, and use it as to him. But with regard to *spiritual blessings*, our grant is illimitable, our requests may be boundless. Here we may leave the shore we have so long been hugging, and boldly launch out into the deep—even the depths of God's love, and of the Savior's grace. "Ask what you will," is the broad, unrestricted warrant. When we ask to be perfected in the love of God, we ask for that which is in accordance with the will of God—for "God is love." When we ask for an increase of faith, we ask for that which is in accordance with the will of God—for "without faith it is impossible to please him." When we ask for more divine conformity, we ask for that which is in harmony with God's will—for he has said, "Be holy, for I am holy." And when we ask for comfort, we plead

for that which is in his heart to give—for he is the "God of all comfort." Oh, to possess a Divine counselor, dwelling in our hearts, who will never indite a wrong prayer, nor suggest a weak argument, nor mislead us in any one particular, in the solemn, the important, the holy engagement of prayer; who is acquainted with the purpose of God; who knows the mind of God; who understands the will of God; who reads the heart of God; yes, who is God himself. What encouragement is this, to more real prayer! Are you moved to pray? While you muse does the fire burn? Is your heart stirred up to ask of God some especial blessing for yourself, or for others? Are you afflicted? Oh, then, rise and pray—the Spirit prompts you—the Savior invites you—your heavenly Father waits to answer you.

With such an Intercessor in the court on earth—so divine, so loving, and so sympathizing; and with such an Intercessor in the court in heaven—so powerful, so eloquent, and so successful—"let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

## **CHAPTER 25.**

### **"All Things Working for Good"**

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. Romans 8:28

What a glorious Being must our God be, who from the direst evil can educe the greatest good! Having, by an exercise of the most divine power, and by an act of the most stupendous grace, "turned the curse into a blessing," he is still in the exercise of the same divine and beneficent power, employed in overruling the daily consequences of man's original woe for the greater promotion of his present happiness. The interesting passage now about to engage our thought, seems an amplification of a truth the inspired writer had previously advanced—that, though this were the *suffering* state of the Church

of God, yet was it a palmy state; for, from those very sufferings were extracted some of the richest blessings of the Christian—that, *by the active combination of all the events of his history, there is working out a great and a present good.* The leading point that arrests the eye in this remarkable verse is the beautiful portrait which it sketches of the believer's character. Let this be our first feature of contemplation.

"Those who love God." Surely it is no small mercy belonging to the Church of Christ, that, composed as it is of all people and tongues, its members "strangers scattered abroad," and its essential unity deeply obscured, and its spiritual beauty sadly disfigured by the numerous divisions which mar and weaken the body of Christ, there yet is an identity of character in all, by which they are not only known to God, but are recognized by each other as members of the one family—or "those who love God."

*Love to God, then, is the grand distinctive feature of the true Christian.* The reverse marks all the unregenerate. Harmonious as their nature, their creed, their church, may be, no love to God is their binding, assimilating feature, their broad distinctive character. But the saints are those who love God. Their creeds may differ in minor shades, their ecclesiastical relations may vary in outward forms—as rays of light, the remoter their distances from the center, the more widely they diverge from each other. Yet in this one particular there is an essential unity of character, and a perfect assimilation of spirit. They love one God and Father; and this truth—like those sundered rays of light returning to the sun, approximate to each other—forms the great assimilating principle by which all who hold the Head, and love the same Savior, are drawn to one center, and in which they all harmonize and unite. The regeneration through which they have passed has effected this great change. Once they were the children of wrath, even as others, at enmity with God. Ah! is not this a heart-affecting thought? But now they love him. The Spirit has supplanted the old principle of enmity by the new principle of love. They love him as revealed in Christ, and they love him for the gift of the Revealer—the visible image of the invisible God. Who, as he has surveyed the glory and realized the preciousness of the Savior, has not felt in his bosom the kindling of a fervent love to him who, when he had no greater gift, commended his love to us by the gift of his dear Son? They love him, too, in *his paternal character.* Standing to them in so close and endearing a relation, they address him as a Father, they confide in him as a Father—they obey him as a Father. The Spirit of adoption takes captive their hearts, and they love God with a child's fervent, adoring, confiding affection. They love God, too, *for all his conduct.* It

varies, but each variation awakens the deep and holy response of love. They love him for the wisdom, the faithfulness, the holiness of his procedure—for what he withholds, as for what he grants when he rebukes, as when he approves. For his frown, they know it to be a Father's frown; for his smile, they feel it to be a Father's smile. They love him for the rod that disciplines as for the scepter that governs—for the wound that bleeds, as for the balm that heals. There is nothing in God, and there is nothing from God, for which the saints do not love him. Of one truth—the source of this feeling—let us not lose sight: "We love him *because he first loved us.*" Thus the motive of love to God as much springs from him, as the power to love him.

"Who are the called according to his purpose." Another characteristic of the children of God is this. The calling here referred to, is that inward, effectual calling of which the same apostle speaks in another place. "Among whom are you also the called of Jesus Christ: to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints." Oh what a glorious vocation is this! To have heard the Holy Spirit's divine yet gentle voice in the deep recesses of the soul—to have felt the drawings of the Savior's love upon the heart—to have listened to a Father's persuasive assurance of a love that has forgotten all our enmity, forgiven all our rebellion, and that remembers only the kindness of our youth, and the love of our espousals—called to be saints, God's holy ones—called to be sons, the Father's adopted ones—Oh this were a vocation worthy indeed of God, and demanding in return our supremest, deepest affection!

The principle upon which this call proceeds is said to be, "according to his purpose." Thus it is a calling over which we have no control, either in originating or frustrating it, and therefore there is no ground of self-boasting. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will." It excludes all idea of *merit* on the part of the called. "Who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, *not according to our works*, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Oh, yield your heart to the full belief and holy influence of thus truth. Does it clash with your creed?—then your creed is defective. Does it awaken the opposition of your heart?—then your heart is not right. Are you really among the "called of God?"—then ascribe it to his eternal purpose, and believe that you have no ground of boasting, in the possession of a favor so distinguished, but in the sovereign will and most free grace of the holy Lord God who has called you. Has this call reached you, my reader? Ministers have called you—the Gospel has called you—providences have called you—conscience has called you—but has the Spirit called you with an inward and

effectual vocation? Have you been called, spiritually called, from darkness to light—from death to life—from sin to holiness—from the world to Christ—from self to God? Examine your heart and ascertain. Oh, it is a matter of the greatest consequence, that you know that you are truly converted, that you are called of God. Has the thrilling, life-inspiring music of that call sounded and reverberated through all the chambers of your soul?

We now come to consider the exalted privilege which appertains to this holy character of those who love God, and who are the called according to his purpose. "All things work together for good." The comprehensiveness of this privilege is boundless. "All things" under the righteous government of God must necessarily be a working out of good. "You are good, and do good." In him there is no evil, and consequently nothing can proceed from him that tends to evil. But lest the great scope of this subject should lead us from the point directly before us, we confine our illustration of this truth to the experience of the individual Christian. Here it is palpably clear and emphatically true that all that occurs in the Lord's government of his people conspires for, and works out, and results in, their highest happiness, their greatest good. The passage supposes something antagonistic to the well-being of the believer in God's conduct at times. He would appear to place himself in an attitude of hostility to those who love him, to stand in their path as with a drawn sword in his hand. And yet, to no single truth does the Church bear a stronger testimony than to this, that the darkest epochs of her history have ever been those from which her brightest luster has arisen; and that those very elements which wore an aspect so portentous and threatening, by a mutual and concurrent influence, under the guiding hand of God, have evolved purposes and plans, have developed thoughts and feelings, and have terminated in results and ends, all seeking and advancing the best welfare, the highest good, of the Church of Christ. But let us pass within the *individual* circle of the church. Shall we take the gloomiest and most painful circumstances in the history of the child of God? The word declares that these identical circumstances, without a solitary exception, are all conspiring, and all working together, for his real and permanent good. As an illustration of this, take tribulation as the starting-point. Thus says the Apostle. "We rejoice in tribulation, knowing that tribulation works *patience*"—the grace that shines with such surpassing luster in the furnace; "and patience experience"—apart from which all religious profession is vain; "and experience hope"—the polestar of the believer voyaging homeward; "and hope makes not ashamed"—but confirms and realizes all that it expected. And yet, from where this flow of precious blessing—serene patience, vital

experience, and beaming hope?—all flow from the somber cloud of tribulation! That tribulation was, perhaps, of the most mysterious character—of the most humiliating nature—of the most overpowering force—yet behold the blessings it flung from its dark bosom! Who with a finite prescience could have predicted, still less have commanded, that from a bud so bitter and unsightly, a flower so sweet and fair should have blown? that a cloud so dark and foreboding should have unbosomed a blessing so brilliant and so precious?

The Bible is rich in its illustrations of this principle of the Divine government. Take for example the case of *Jacob*. Heavy and lowering was the cloud now settling upon his tabernacle. Severe was the test, and fearful the trembling of his faith. His feet were almost gone. The sad recollection of his *bereavement* still hovered like clinging shadows around his memory; gaunt *famine* stared him in the face; and a messenger with tidings of yet heavier woe lingered upon the threshold of his door. And when those tidings broke upon his ear, how touching the expression of his grief! "You have deprived me of my children! Joseph has disappeared, Simeon is gone, and now you want to take Benjamin, too. Everything is going against me!" Genesis 42:36. But lo! the circumstances which to the dim eye of his faith wore a hue so somber, and an aspect so alarming, were at that moment developing and perfecting the events which were to smooth his passage to the grave, and shed around the evening of his life, the halo of a glorious and a cloudless sunset. All things were working together for his good!

*Joseph*, too, reviewing the past of his chequered and mysterious history, arrives at the same conclusion, and confirms the same truth. Seeking to tranquilize his self-condemning brothers, he says, "But as for you, you thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save many people alive." The envy of his brethren, his being sold as a slave, his imprisonment, were all working out God's purpose and plan of wisdom and love. And yet, who could have foreseen and predicted, that from those untoward events; the exaltation, power, and wealth of Joseph would spring? Yet all things were working together for good. Thus is it, too, in the history of the Lord's loving corrections. They are all the unfoldings of a design, parts of a perfect whole. From these dealings, sometimes so heart-crushing, what signal blessings flow! "You have chastised me, and I was chastised." And what was the result? It awoke from Ephraim this precious acknowledgment and prayer: "Surely after I was turned, I repented; and after I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yes, even

confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." Oh, who can compute the good, the real, the permanent good that results from the trying dispensations of God?—from the corrections of a Father's love? The things that appear to militate against the believer, unfolding their heaven-sent mission, turn out rather for the furtherance of his best welfare and his highest interest.

But observe *the* unity of operation. They "work together," not singly and separately, but conjointly, as adjunct causes and mutual helps. Therefore it is that we often mark a *plurality of trial* in the calamity which befalls the Christian. Seldom does affliction come solitary and alone—the gentle wavelet upon the surface forebodes the agitation of the waters and is often the precursor of the mountain billow, and the billow in its turn is often the herald of the huge waterspout. Storm rises upon storm, cloud on cloud. One messenger of woe is quickly succeeded by another, burdened with tidings of yet heavier sorrow. Trace the wisdom, nor the wisdom only, but the love of your God, O child of suffering, in ordaining your path to heaven through "much tribulation," and in weaving around you many trials. Single and alone, the good they are charged to convey were but partially accomplished, and the evil they were designed to meet but imperfectly cured. It is the compounding of the ingredients in the recipe that constitutes its sanative power. Extract any one ingredient, and you impair the others and destroy the whole. We may not understand the chemistry of the process; we do not see how one element acts upon the properties of the others, nor how, by the combination of all, the cure is effected. Yet, confiding in the skill of the compounder, and submitting our reason to our faith, we take the remedy and receive the benefit. So, with the Divine dispensations, they work, but "work together." How assuredly would the curative process of trial be impaired, if but one of the several sent were lacking! How would the adjustment, harmony, and symmetry of God's arrangement be destroyed, if one dark dispensation were lacking of, perhaps, the many which hang upon our horizon! It is the *combination* of sound, the harmony of many, and often discordant notes, that constitute music. Oh, how imperfectly are we aware, not of the necessity of trial only, but of a *plurality* of trial, in order to wake from our lips the sweetest, loftiest anthem of praise and thanksgiving to God! Thus it is that the most deeply tried believers are the most skillful and the most melodious choristers in God's church. They sing the sweetest on earth, and they sing the loudest in heaven, who are passing through, and who have come out of, "great tribulation." Then, Christian, count it all joy when you fall into diverse trials; do not be terrified if wave responds to wave—if cloud caps cloud—if storm

rises on storm—if your Joseph has been taken, and now your Benjamin be demanded. The greater the accumulation of trial, the richer the freight it bears. Then it is that the interposition, the wisdom, and love of our God appear the most conspicuous and wonderful. Having delivered us out of six troubles, we see him hastening to our rescue in the seventh. Then it is, the experience of the sweet singer of Israel awakes an echo in our heart: "He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters." It has been well observed, "The mechanism of providence is made up of so many *parts*" as often to baffle the comprehension of man; yet all is clear to the eye and under the sovereign hand of Him who works it; and when we are lost in the bewildering mazes of a history that we cannot scan; when we are entangled among the mazes of a labyrinth that we cannot understand, it is well to be told that all is ordered, and that all works for good."

And let us not forget that it is a present working. It says not that all things have worked together for good, though this is most true. It says not that all things shall work together for good, though this is equally certain. But it says that all things do *now* work together for good. It is not a past, nor a future, but a present process. They are always working for good. The operation may be as invisible and noiseless as the leaven fermenting in the bread, and yet not less certain and effectual. The kingdom of God comes not into our souls with observation, nor does it grow in our souls with observation. And whether the good thus borne upon the raven-wing of trial, thus embosomed in the lowering cloud of some crushing providence, be immediate or remote, it matters little; sooner or later it will accomplish its benevolent and heaven-sent mission, and then trial will expand its dark pinions and fly away; and sorrow will roll up its somber drapery and disappear. The painful and inexplicable dispensations, which at the present moment may be thickening and deepening around your path, are but so many problems in God's government, which he is working out to their certain, satisfactory, and happy results.

Safely, then, may the Apostle rest his appeal with us: "We know that all things work together for good." We know it, because God has said it. We know it, because others have testified to it. Best of all, we know it, because we have experienced it ourselves. We can set our seal to the truth that all things under the government of an infinitely great, all-wise, righteous, and beneficent Lord God, both in the world, and in the church, and in the history of each member of the church, work together for good. What that good may be, the shape it may assume, the complexion it may wear, the end to which it may be subservient, we cannot tell. To our dim view it may appear an evil, but to

God's far—seeing eye it is a positive good. His glory is secured by it, and, that end accomplished, we are sure it must be good. Oh, truth most divine! Oh, words most consolatory! How many whose eye traces this page, it may be whose tears bedew it, whose sighs breathe over it, whose prayers hallow it, may be wading in deep waters, may be drinking bitter cups, and are ready to exclaim—"All these things are against me!" Oh no, beloved of God, all these things are for you! "The Lord sits upon the flood." "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters." "He makes the clouds his chariot." Do not be, then, afraid! Christ restrains the flood upon whose heaving bosom he serenely sits. Christ controls the waters, whose sounding waves obey the mandate of his voice. Christ's cloudy chariot is paved with love. Then, fear not! Your Father grasps the helm of your storm tossed bark, and through cloud and tempest will steer it safely to the port of endless rest. "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon the heavens in your help, and in his excellency on the sky. The Eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

Again learn *instruction* from analogy. All the beauty, and fragrance, and music of nature, spring from a union and blending of opposites. So is it in that kingdom which is within you. The beauty of holiness with which God adorns you—the perfume of grace which he flings around you—the melody of praise which he wakes from your lips—are the result of "all things" in your history conspiring, combining, and working together for your good.

"Love you your sorrow? Grief shall bring  
Its own excuse in after years.  
The rainbow—see how fair a thing  
God has built up from tears!"

Oh, calmly stay your faith, then, on this divinely assured truth, that "all things work together for good to those who love God." Will it not be a good, if your present adversity results in the dethronement of some worshiped idol—in the endearing of Christ to your soul—in the closer conformity of your mind to God's image—in the purification of your heart in your more thorough fitness for heaven? Will it not be a real good if it terminate in a revival of God's work within you—in stirring you up to more prayer—in enlarging your heart to all that love the same Savior—in stimulating you to increased activity for the conversion of sinners, for the diffusion of the truth, and for the glory of God? Oh yes! good, real good, permanent good must result from all the Divine dispensations in your history. Bitter repentance shall end in the experienced

sweetness of Christ's love. The festering wound shall but elicit the healing balm. The overpowering burden shall but bring you to the tranquil rest. The storm shall but quicken your footsteps to the Hiding place. The north wind and the south wind shall breathe together over your garden, and the spices shall flow out. In a little while—oh, how soon!—you shall pass away from earth to heaven, and in its clearer, serener light shall read the truth, often read with tears before, "All things work together for good to those who love God."

"Oh, what a load of struggle and distress  
Falls off before the Cross! The Feverish care;  
The wish that we were other than we are  
The sick regrets; the yearnings numberless;  
The thought, 'This might have been,' so apt to press  
On the reluctant soul! even past despair,  
Past sin itself—all—all is turned to fair,  
Ay, to a scheme of ordered happiness,  
So soon as we love God, or rather, know  
That God loves us! Accepting the great pledge  
Of His concern for all our wants and woe,  
We cease to tremble upon danger's edge,  
While varying troubles form and burst anew,  
Safe in a Father's arms, we smile as infants do!"  
(Townshend)

## **CHAPTER 26.**

### **"Divine Predestination"**

**"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren"—Romans 8:29.**

Guided by the latter clause of the preceding verse, we were led to advert to the settled purpose and plan of God as it related to the conversion of His people. The passage under present consideration carries forward the same argument another step, and shows that the doctrine thus clearly enunciated is not a crude and speculative dogma of the schools, which some suppose, but is a truth of distinct revelation, divine in its origin, experimental in its nature, and

sanctifying and comforting in its effects. Let us, then, divesting our minds of all prejudice, address ourselves to its consideration, in prayerful reliance upon the teaching of the Spirit, and with the earnest simplicity of children desiring to come to a knowledge of the truth, and to stand complete in all the will of God.

"Whom he did foreknow." In this place the word "foreknow" assumes a particular and explicit meaning. In its wider and more general application it must be regarded as referring not simply to the divine prescience, but more especially to the divine prearrangement. For God to foreknow is, in the strict meaning of the phrase, for God to foreordain. *There are no guesses, conjectures, or contingencies with God as to the future. Not only does He know all, but He has fixed, appointed, and ordered "all things after the counsel of his own will."* In this view there exists not a creature, and there transpires not an event, which was not as real and palpable to the divine mind from eternity as it is at the present moment. Indeed, it would seem that there were no future with God. An eternal Being, there can be nothing prospective in His looking on all things. There must be an eternity of perception, and constitution, and presence; and the mightiest feature of His character—that which conveys to a finite mind the most vivid conception of His grandeur and greatness—is the simultaneousness of all succession, variety, and events to His eye. "He is of one mind; and who can turn him?"

But the word "foreknow," as it occurs in the text, adds to this yet another, a more definite, and, to the saints, a more precious signification. The foreknowledge here spoken of, it will be observed, is limited to a particular class of people who are said to be "conformed to the image of God's Son." Now this cannot, with truth, be predicated of all creatures. The term, therefore, assumes a particular and impressive signification. It includes *the everlasting love of God to, and His most free choice of, His people, to be His special and peculiar treasure.* We find some examples of this—"God has not cast away his people which he foreknew" (Rom. 11:2). Here the word is expressive of the two ideas of love and choice. Again, "Who verily was foreordained (Greek, foreknown) before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet. 1:20). "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). Clearly, then, we are justified in interpreting the phrase as expressive of God's special choice of, and His intelligent love to, His church—His own peculiar people. It is a foreknowledge of choice, of love, of eternal grace and faithfulness.

"He also did predestinate." This word admits of but one natural signification.

**Predestination, in its lowest sense, is understood to mean the exclusive agency of God in producing every event. But it includes more than this: it takes in God's pre-determinate appointment and fore-arrangement of a thing beforehand, according to His divine and supreme will. The Greek is so rendered—"For to do whatever your hand and your counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:28). Again, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Eph. 1:5). It is here affirmed of God, that the same prearrangement and predetermination that men in general are agreed to ascribe to Him in the government of matter, extends equally, and with yet stronger force, to the concerns of His moral administration. It would seem impossible to form any correct idea of God, disassociated from the idea of predestination. As a divine wrote, "The sole basis of predestination is the practical belief that God is eternal and infinite in and over all. And the sole aim of its assertion should be, as the sole legitimate effect of that assertion is, to settle down the wavering and rebel soul from the vague, skeptical, and superstitious inapplicabilities of chance as to this world's history, unto the living, overwhelming, and humbling practicality of conviction, that, just because God sees all things, provides all things, and has power over all things, therefore man must act as if he believed this to be true. The first and the last conviction of every honest inquirer must be, that God is, and is Lord over all—and the whole of Scripture bears testimony to the fact of His infinitude."**

**And yet how marvelously difficult it is to win the mind to a full, unwavering acquiescence in a truth which, in a different application, is received with unquestioning readiness! And what is there in the application of this law of the divine government to the world of matter, which is not equally reasonable and fit in its application to the world of mind? If it is necessary and proper in the material, why should it not be equally, or more so, in the spiritual empire? If God is allowed the full exercise of a sovereignty in the one, why should He be excluded from an unlimited sovereignty in the other? Surely it were even more worthy of Him that He should prearrange, predetermine, and supremely rule in the concerns of a world over which His more dignified and glorious empire extends, than that in the inferior world of matter He should fix a constellation in the heavens, guide the gyrations of a bird in the air, direct the falling of an autumn leaf in the pathless desert, or convey the seed, borne upon the wind, to the spot where it should fall. Surely if no fortuitous ordering is admitted in the one case, on infinitely stronger grounds it should be excluded from the other. Upon no other basis could divine foreknowledge and providence take their stand than upon this. Disconnected from the will**

and purpose of God there could be nothing certain as to the future, and consequently there could be nothing certainly foreknown. And were not providence to regulate and control people, things, and events—every dispensation, in fact—by the same preconstructed plan, it would follow that God would be exposed to a thousand unforeseen contingencies, or else that He acts ignorantly or contrary to His will.

But it is not so much our province to establish the truth of this doctrine, and explain its reasonableness and the harmony of its relations, as to trace its sanctifying tendency and effect. Predestination must be a divine verity, since it stands essentially connected with our conformity to the divine image. "Predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son." Addressing ourselves to this deeply interesting and important branch of our subject, let us first contemplate the believer's model.

"The image of his Son." No standard short of this will meet the case. How conspicuous appears the wisdom and how glorious the goodness of God in this—that in making us holy, the model or standard of that holiness should be Deity itself! God would make us holy, and in doing so He would make us like Himself.

*But with what pen—dipped though it were in heaven's brightest hues—can we portray the image of Jesus? The perfection of our Lord was the perfection of holiness. His Deity, essential holiness—His humanity without sin, the impersonation of holiness, all that He was, said, and did, was as flashes of holiness emanating from the fountain of essential purity, and kindling their dazzling and undying radiance around each step He trod. How lowly, too, His character! How holy the thoughts He breathed, how pure the words He spoke, how humble the spirit He exemplified, how tender and sympathizing the outgoings of His compassion and love to man. He is "the chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely."*

Such is the believer's model. To this he is predestinated to be conformed. And is not this predestination in its highest form? Would it seem possible for God to have preordained us to a greater blessing, to have chosen us to a higher distinction? In choosing us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, He has advanced us to the loftiest degree of honor and happiness to which a creature can be promoted—assimilation to His own moral image. And this forms the highest ambition of the believer. To

transcribe those beautiful lineaments which, in such perfect harmony and beautiful expression, blended and shone in the life of Jesus, is the great study of all His true disciples. But in what does this conformity consist?

The first feature is, a conformity of nature. And this is reciprocal. The Son of God, by an act of divine power, became human; the saints of God, by an act of sovereign grace, partake "of the divine nature," 2 Peter 1:4 says. This harmony of nature forms the basis of all conformity. Thus grafted into Christ, we grow up into Him in all holy resemblance. The meekness, the holiness, the patience, the self-denial, the zeal, the love, traceable in us—though faint and imperfect—are transfers of Christ's beautiful and faultless lineaments to our renewed soul. Thus the mind that was in Him is in some measure in us. And in our moral conflict, battling as we do with sin, Satan, and the world, we come to know a little of fellowship with His sufferings and conformity to His death.

We are here supplied with a test of Christian character. It is an anxious question with many professors of Christ, "How may I arrive at a correct conclusion that I am among the predestinated of God—that I am included in His purpose of grace and love—that I have a saving interest in the Lord's salvation?" The passage under consideration supplies the answer—conformity to the image of God's Son. Nothing short of this can justify the belief that we are saved. No evidence less strong can authenticate the fact of our predestination. The determination of God to save men is not so fixed as to save no matter what their character may be. Christ's work is a salvation from sin, not in sin. "According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy" (Eph. 1:4). In other words, that we should be conformed to the divine image. That we *should be like Christ in His divine nature, in the purity of His human nature, in the humility He exemplified, in the self-denial He practiced, and in the heavenly life He lived.* In a word, in all that this expressive sentence comprehends—"conformed to the image of his Son."

As we grow day by day more holy, more spiritually minded, more closely resembling Jesus, we are placing the truth of our predestination to eternal life in a clearer, stronger light, and consequently the fact of our salvation beyond a misgiving and a doubt. In view of this precious truth, *what spiritual heart will not breathe the prayer, "O Lord! I cannot be satisfied merely to profess and call myself Yours. I want more of the power of vital religion in my soul. I pant for Your image. My deepest grief springs from the discovery of the little real resemblance which I bear to a model so peerless, so divine—that I exemplify so little of Your patience in suffering; Your meekness in opposition; Your forgiving*

*spirit in injury; Your gentleness in reproof; Your firmness in temptation; Your singleness of eye in all that I do. Oh, transfer Yourself wholly to me. What were this world, yes, what were heaven itself, without You? A universe of creatures, the fondest, the holiest, could not be Your substitute to my yearning, longing soul, O Lord! Come, and occupy Your own place in my heart. Awaken it to Your love. Sweep its chords with Your gentle hand, and it shall breathe sweet music to Your dear name.*

**I love You, Savior, for my soul craves joy!  
I need You, without hope I cannot live!  
I look for You; my nature pants to give  
Its every power a rapture and employ;  
And there are things which I would sincerely destroy  
Within my bosom; things that make me grieve;  
Sin, and her child, Distrust, that often weave  
About my spirit darkness and annoy:  
And none but You can these dissolve in light;  
And so I long for You, as those who stay  
In the deep waters long for dawning day!  
Nor would I only have my being bright,  
But peaceful, too; so ask You if I might  
My head on Your dear bosom lean always.  
—Townshend**

**"That he might be the firstborn among many brethren." The Son of God sustains to us the relation of the Elder Brother. He is emphatically the "Firstborn." In another place we read, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also likewise took part of the same." He is the "Brother born for adversity." Our relation to Him as our Brother is evidenced by our conformity to Him as our model. We have no valid claim to relationship which springs not from a resemblance to His image. The features may be indistinctly visible, yet one line of holiness, one true lineament, drawn upon the heart by the Holy Spirit, proves our fraternal relationship to Him, the "Firstborn."**

**And how large the brotherhood—"many brethren!" What the relative proportion of the church is to the world—how many will be saved—is a question speculative and profitless. But this we know, the number will be vast, countless. The one family of God is composed of "many brethren." They are not all of the same judgment in all matters, but they are all of the same spirit.**

**The unity of the family of God is not ecclesiastical, nor geographical; it is spiritual and essential. It is the "unity of the Spirit." Begotten of one Father, in the nature of the Elder Brother, and through the regenerating grace of the one Spirit, all the saints of God constitute one church, one family, one brotherhood—essentially and indivisibly one. Nor is this relationship difficult to recognize.**

**Consider an illustration: Two brethren in the Lord of widely different sections of the church, and of much dissonance of sentiment on some points of truth, meet and converse together. With the Word of God in hand, each is surprised that the other does not read it as he reads it and interpret it as he interprets it. But they drop the points of difference and take up the points of agreement. They speak of Christ—the Christ who loves them both, and whom they both love. They talk of the one Master whom they serve; of their common labors, infirmities, trials, temptations, discouragements, failures, and successes. They talk of the heaven where they are journeying; of their Father's house, in which they will dwell together forever. They kneel in prayer; they cast themselves before the cross; the oil of gladness anoints them; their hearts are broken, their spirits are humbled, their souls are blended; they rise and feel more deeply and more strongly than ever that they both belong to the same family, are both of the "many brethren," of whom the Son of God is the "Firstborn," the Elder Brother. Oh, blessed unity! What perfect harmony of creed, what strict conformity of ritual, what sameness of denominational relation, is for a moment to be compared with this? Have you, my reader, this evidence that you belong to the "many brethren?"**

**It is our purpose to conclude by briefly showing how encouraging the doctrine of predestination is to the soul in sincere and earnest seeking of Christ, and by tracing some of the peculiar blessings which flow from it to the saints of God. There is a class of individuals, unhappily a large one, over whose spiritual feelings the doctrine of divine predestination would seem to have cast a deep and settled gloom. We refer to those who are apt to regard this truth with deep antipathy, if not with absolute horror, as constituting, in their view, one of the most formidable and insurmountable obstacles to their salvation. But the validity of this objection we by no means admit. There can be nothing in the Bible adverse to the salvation of a sinner. The doctrine of predestination is a revealed doctrine of the Bible; therefore, predestination cannot be opposed to the salvation of the sinner. So far from this being true, we don't hesitate most strongly and emphatically to affirm that we know of no doctrine of God's Word more replete with encouragement to the awakened, sin-**

burdened, Christ-seeking soul than this.

**What stronger evidence can we have of our election of God than the Spirit's work in the heart? Are you really in earnest for the salvation of your soul? Do you feel the plague of sin? Are you sensible of the condemnation of the law? Do you come under the denomination of the "weary and heavy laden?" If so, then the fact that you are a subject of divine drawings—that you have a felt conviction of your sinfulness—and that you are seeking for a place of refuge, affords the strongest ground for believing that you are one of those whom God has predestinated to eternal life. The very work thus begun is the Spirit's first outline of the divine image upon your soul—that very image to which the saints are predestinated to be conformed.**

**But while we thus vindicate this doctrine as being inimical to the salvation of the anxious soul, we must, with all distinctness and earnestness declare that in this stage of your Christian course, you have primarily and mainly to do with another and a different doctrine. We refer to the doctrine of the atonement. If you could look into the book of the divine decrees, and read your name inscribed upon its pages, it would not impart the joy and peace which one believing view of Christ crucified will convey. It is not essential to your salvation that you believe in election; but it is essential to your salvation that you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. In your case, as an individual debating the momentous question, "how a sinner may be justified before God," your first business is with Christ, and Christ exclusively. You are to feel that you are a lost sinner, not that you are an elect saint. The doctrine which meets the present phase of your spiritual condition is not the doctrine of predestination, but the doctrine of an atoning Savior. The truth to which you are to give the first consideration, and the most simple and unquestioning credence is, that "Christ died for the ungodly," that He came into the world to save sinners, that He came to call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance, that in all respects, in the great business of our salvation, He stands before us in the relation of a Savior, while we stand before Him in the character of a sinner.**

**The mental conflict into which you have been brought touching this doctrine, is but a subtle and dexterous stroke of the enemy to divert your thoughts from Christ. Your soul is at this moment in what may be termed a transitional state. A crisis in your history has been reached. How momentous the result! Shall we portray your present feelings? You are sensible of your sinfulness, are oppressed by its guilt, and are in dread of its condemnation. You have no peace of mind, no joy of heart, no hope of heaven. Life with you has lost its**

charm, society its attractions, and pleasure its sweetness. A somber hue paints every object, and insipidity marks every engagement. Where this marvellous revolution, this essential and wondrous change? We answer, it is the Spirit of God moving upon your soul. And what truth, do you think, meets the case? Predestination? Election? Oh, no! These are hidden links in the great chain of your salvation, upon which in your present state, you are not called to lay your hand in grasping that chain.

But there are other and intermediate links, visible, near, and within your reach. Take hold of them, and you are saved: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin." "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that comes unto me I will in no wise cast out." "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." "Ho, every one that thirsts, come you to the waters." "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." "By grace are you saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

Grasp, in simple faith, each or any one of these golden links, and from that moment for you there is no condemnation. But what is the real difficulty? It is not predestination. Travel into the inmost recesses of your heart and ascertain. May there not be some defect in your actual conviction of sin? Were you thoroughly convinced of your lost and ruined condition as a sinner, would you cavil and demur at any one revealed doctrine of Scripture? Would this, of all doctrines, prove a real stumbling block in your way? Would the question of election give you a moment's serious thought? Would it interpose a true and valid objection to your coming to Christ to be saved by Him? Suppose, to illustrate the idea, you were roused from sleep in the dead hour of night by the approach of flames kindling fiercely around you. One avenue of escape presented itself. Would you pause for an instant upon its threshold to debate the question of your predestinated safety? Would you not at once decide the question in your favor, by an instant retreat from the devouring element, through the only door that proffered you deliverance? Most assuredly. To a matter so momentous as your salvation apply the same reasoning. Were it not

folly, yes, insanity itself, to hesitate for a moment to consider whether you are predestinated to escape the wrath to come, when, if you do not escape, that wrath will assuredly overwhelm you? One refuge alone presents itself. One avenue only invites your escape. Let no other doctrine but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ occupy your thoughts at this juncture of your religious course. Diverging from this path, you will be plunged into a sea of perplexities, you know not how inextricable, which may land you, you know not where. For they who have

**Reasoned high**

**Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,  
Fixed fate, freewill, foreknowledge absolute,  
Have found no end in wandering mazes lost.**

**O let one object fix your eye and one theme fill your mind—Christ and His salvation. Absorbed in the contemplation and study of these two points, you may safely defer all further inquiry to another and a more advanced stage of your Christian course. Remember that the fact of your predestination, the certainty of your election, can only be inferred from your conversion. We must hold you firmly to this truth. It is the subtle and fatal reasoning of Satan, a species of atheistical fatalism, to argue, "If I am elected I shall be saved whether I am regenerated or not." The path to eternal woe is paved with arguments like this. Men have cajoled their souls with such vain excuses until they have found themselves beyond the region of hope!**

**But we must rise to the fountain by pursuing the stream. Conversion and not predestination, is the end of the chain we are to grasp. We must ascend from ourselves to God, and not descend from God to ourselves, in settling this great question. We must judge of God's objective purpose of love concerning us, by His subjective work of grace within us. One of the martyr Reformers has wisely remarked, "We need not go about to trouble ourselves with curious questions of the predestination of God; but let us rather endeavor ourselves that we may be in Christ. For, when we are in Him, then are we well: and then we may be sure that we are ordained to everlasting life. When you find these three things in your hearts, repentance, faith, and a desire to leave sin, then you may be sure your names are written in the book, and you may be sure also, that you are elected and predestinated to eternal life." Again he observes, "If you are desiring to know whether you are chosen to everlasting life, you may not begin with God, for God is too high, you can not comprehend Him. Begin with Christ, and learn to know Christ, and wherefore He came; namely,**

that He came to save sinners, and made Himself subject to the law, and a fulfiller of the law, to deliver us from the wrath and danger thereof. If you know Christ, then you may know further of your election." And illustrating his idea by his own personal experience, he says, "If I believe in Christ alone for salvation, I am certainly interested in Christ; and interested in Christ I could not be, if I were not chosen and elected of God."

In conclusion, we earnestly entreat you to lay aside all fruitless speculations, and to give yourself to prayer. Let reason bow to faith, and faith shut you up to Christ, and Christ be all in all to you. Once more we solemnly affirm that, conversion, and not predestination, is the doctrine with which, in your present state of inquiry, you have to do. Beware that you come not short of true conversion—a changed heart, and a renewed mind, so that you become "a new creature in Christ Jesus." And if *as a poor lost sinner you repair to the Savior, all vile, guilty, unworthy, and weak as you are, He will receive you, and shelter you within the bosom that bled on the cross, to provide an atonement and an asylum for the very chief of sinners.* Intermeddle not, therefore, with a state which you can only ascertain to be yours by the Spirit's work upon your heart. "Your election will be known by your interest in Christ; and your interest in Christ by the sanctification of the Spirit. Here is a chain of salvation; the beginning of it is from the Father; the dispensation of it through the Son; the application of it by the Spirit. In looking after the comfort of election, you must look inward to the work of the Spirit in your heart; then outward to the work of Christ on the cross; then upward to the heart of the Father in heaven." Oh, let your prayer be "God be merciful to me a sinner," until that prayer is answered in the assurance of full pardon sealed upon your conscience by the Holy Spirit. *Thus knocking at mercy's door, the heart of God will fly open, and admit you to all the hidden treasures of its love.*

We can but group some of the great blessings which flow from this truth to the saints of God. The doctrine of predestination is well calculated to confirm and strengthen the true believer in the fact and certainty of his salvation through Christ. Feeling, as he does, the plague of his own heart, experiencing the preciousness of the Savior, looking up through the cross to God as his Father, exulting in a hope that makes not ashamed, and remembering that God the Eternal Spirit only renews those who are chosen by God the Father, and are redeemed by God the Son, this doctrine is found to be most comforting and confirming to his faith. The faintest lineaments of resemblance to God, and the feeblest breathing of the Spirit of adoption he discovers in his soul, is to him an indisputable evidence of his predestination

to divine sonship and holiness.

*Another blessing accruing from the doctrine is the sweet and holy submission into which it brings the mind under all afflictive dispensations. Each step of his pilgrimage, and each incident of his history, the believer sees appointed in the everlasting covenant of grace. He recognizes the discipline of the covenant to be as much a part of the original plan as any positive mercy that it contains. That all the hairs of his head are numbered; that affliction springs not out of the earth, and therefore is not the result of accident or chance, but is in harmony with God's purposes of love; and, thus ordained and permitted, must work together for good.*

Not the least blessing resulting from this truth (2 Thess. 2:13) is its tendency to promote personal godliness. The believer feels that God has "chosen us to salvation through sanctification and belief of the truth;" that He has "chosen us that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4); that we are "his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). Thus the believer desires to "give all diligence to make his calling and election sure," or undoubted, by walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless, and standing complete in all the will of God.

*And what doctrine is more emptying, humbling, and therefore sanctifying, than this? It lays the axe at the root of all human boasting. In the light of this truth, the most holy believer sees that there is no difference between him and the vilest sinner that crawls the earth, but what the mere grace of God has made. Such are some of the many blessings flowing to the Christian from this truth. The radiance which it reflects upon the entire history of the child of God, and the calm repose which it diffuses over the mind in all the perplexing, painful, and mysterious events of that history, can only be understood by those whose hearts have fully received the doctrine of predestination. Whatever betides him; inexplicable in its character, enshrouded in the deepest gloom, as may be the circumstance; the believer in this truth can "stand still," and, calmly surveying the scene, exclaim: "This also comes forth from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. He who works all things after the counsel of His own will has done it, and I am satisfied that it is well done."*

In conclusion, saints of God, have close relations and intimate dealings with your Elder Brother. Repose in Him your confidence, yield to Him your

affections, consecrate to Him your service. He regards you with ineffable delight. With all your interests He is identified, and with all your sorrows He sympathizes. He may, like Joseph, at times speak roughly to His brethren, in the trying dispensations of His providence; yet, like Joseph, He veils beneath that apparent harshness a brother's deep and yearning love. Seek a closer resemblance to His image, to which, ever remember, you are predestinated to be conformed. In order to this, study His beauty, His precepts, His example, that with "open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, you may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

## **CHAPTER 27.**

### **"Effectual Calling"**

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. Romans 8:30

And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. Romans 8:30

And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And he gave them right standing with himself, and he promised them his glory. Romans 8:30

The truth of God must necessarily be a perfect whole, a chain of doctrines in which not a single link is lacking to connect together the different parts binding and weaving them into a beautiful and harmonious system. To a mind not thoroughly skilled in the deep things of God, this chain may appear broken and incomplete, because to such an individual there may appear truths which are either irreconcilable or are invisible altogether. But this apparent discrepancy and invisibility of truth forms no real evidence of an actual lack of continuity or harmony, any more than a chain thrown across the channel of a river would be regarded as broken and incomplete simply because some of its links were submerged beneath the stream, or its two extremes were invisible to the eye. A beautiful chain of truth is presented to our view in the present verse. The first and extreme link has already been examined. The second, a sequence from the first, is now to engage our attention; the effectual calling of those who are predestinated.

**"Whom he predestinated, them he also CALLED." While we maintain that the calling here referred to is a *particular* and *effectual* vocation, we yet as strenuously maintain that there is *an external call* lying at the door of every individual who hears the Gospel. Recognizing human responsibility, the Gospel meets man as a sinful and accountable being. It lifts up its voice in silver tones, and exclaims, "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men." When our Lord returned from his grave, he enlarged the commission of his apostles, and placed the call of the Gospel upon a broader basis. "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Thus to every creature the external call of the Gospel is to be addressed. Who will dare to limit and circumscribe what God has made as wide and boundless as man's moral necessity? "Many are called." Oh, it is a real and a solemn call, the call of the Gospel. He who hears it is brought beneath a responsibility the most tremendous. From its obligations nothing can ever release him. For every summons he has had to repent, to lay down his arms, to give up his enmity, to turn to the Lord, to believe in Christ, to escape from the wrath to come, he will be called to an account when all shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Dear reader, has the music of this call, breaking so sweetly and so solemnly upon your external ear, penetrated your soul, echoing through the chambers of your heart, and awaking a response of love, surrender, and obedience? Or—solemn conclusion!—or, are you wilfully turning from the sound "like the deaf adder that stops her ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming ever so wisely?"**

**But the call here referred to is the especial call of the Gospel—the secret, effectual call which has found its way to the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. The connection of these two truths—an especial people, and an especial call—is thus conclusively shown—"And that he might make known the riches of his glory in the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he has called." "Who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began." "Those who are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Christ Jesus, and called." Honored Church! Happy people! Called to be saints. Oh, to have the Divine testimony that we are among them!**

**But *from what, and into what, are the Lord's people called?* The Apostle answers—"That you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." It is indeed "marvellous light;" and**

marvellous grace, that calls us out of a deeper than Egyptian darkness, to see and rejoice in the glory of God beaming in the face of Jesus Christ. We find it, too, a calling into *liberty*. "Brethren, you have been called unto liberty." Bond-slaves to sin and Satan, we become Christ's freemen, those whom his Spirit and truth have made free. It is also a call into *fellowship*. "God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;" - called into a oneness with Christ, privileged to open the heart to him in all the confidence and affection of a child, while in return he reveals the secret of the Lord to us.

And what are some of the attributes of this calling? It is holy. "Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling." They who are the subjects of this call desire to be holy. Their direst evil is sin. It is, in their experience, not a silken chain, but a galling fetter, beneath whose weight they mourn, and from whose bondage they sigh to be delivered. It is a high and heavenly calling. "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." How does this calling elevate a man—his principles, his character, his aims, his hopes! It is emphatically a "high vocation." So heavenly is it, too, it brings something of heaven into the soul. It imparts heavenly affections, heavenly joys, and heavenly aspirations. It leads to heaven. Could he look within the veil, each called saint would see a prepared mansion, a vacant throne, a jeweled crown, a robe, and a palm, all ready for the wearing and the waving, awaiting him in glory. Thus it is a call from heaven and to heaven. It is an irrevocable calling. "For God's gifts and his call can never be withdrawn." God has never for a moment repented that he chose, nor has the Savior repented that he redeemed, nor has the Spirit repented that he called, any of his people. Not all their wanderings, nor failures, nor unfruitfulness, has ever awakened one regret in the heart of God that he has called them to be saints. "I knew that you would deal treacherously." "He will visit their transgressions with his rod, and their iniquities with his stripes, but his loving-kindness he will not take from them, nor allow his faithfulness to fail." "Faithful is he that calls you."

Nor must we overlook the Divine sovereignty which appears so illustrious in this especial calling. All ground of human boasting is removed, and God has secured to himself, from eternity, the entire glory of his people's salvation. So conspicuously appears the sovereignty of God in this effectual calling, that all foundation of creature-glory is annihilated. And if it be asked by the disputers of this truth, why one is called and another is left? Why Jacob, and not Esau?

**Why David, and not Saul? Why Cornelius the Gentile, and not Tertullus the Jew? Why the poor beggars in the highway, and not the bidden guests? Why the woman who laved with her tears the Savior's feet, and not Simon, in whose house the grateful act was performed? The answer is, "He will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy." To this acquiescence in the sovereignty of the Divine Will our Lord was brought when he beheld the mysteries of the Gospel veiled from the wise of this world: "I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seems good in your sight." To this precious truth let us bow; and if the efficacious grace of God has reached our hearts, let us ascribe its discriminating choice to the sovereign pleasure of that Divine and supreme Will, which rules among the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth, and to which no creature dare say, "What are you doing?"**

**But let us pass for a moment to a more experimental and practical view of this subject. The question has often been asked by the trembling lip, "How may I be assured of an interest in the eternal purpose and everlasting love of God? By what evidence may I conclude that I am one I whom he predestinated?" Listen to the words of the Apostle, addressed to the Thessalonian saints, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." But how did he know this? Had he read their names in the Lamb's book of Life? No! See how he solves the mystery: "For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance." By this he knew their election of God. And by a similar test you must bring the question to an issue. Has the Gospel come to your heart by the Holy Spirit? In other words, have you been called by the inward call? Have you fled as a poor sinner to Christ, and is he all your salvation and all your desire? Assume the truth of nothing, take nothing for granted as to your salvation, until thus is the case. We recur to a thought advanced in the preceding chapter, that it is with the fact of your *open call*, and not with the fact of your *secret predestination*, that you have mainly to do. It is this central and visible link in the chain that you must grasp. Secret things belong to God. The things revealed belong to us. You are assuming an attitude of the most appalling temerity in attempting to force your way into the secret counsels of the Most High, plunging into the fathomless depths of a past eternity, and intruding into those mysteries, veiled and unsearchable, upon whose awful threshold an angel's foot dare not tread. But oh, how near, how visible, how precious, the truth with which you have to do—God standing in the most impressive and winning attitude of a gracious, sin-pardoning God—inviting you, imploring you, all guilty, and burdened,**

and sorrowful as you are, to accept his mercy, to avail yourself of his forgiveness, to believe in his Son; and thus by grasping the outstretched hand, by heeding the earnest call, and accepting the gracious invitation, you may set forever at rest the question of your salvation. Oh, let the great, the all-absorbing question with you be, "What shall I do to be saved?" Postpone every other question, adjourn every other debate, until this is met and fairly settled, that you are the called of God. Take hold of the full and free invitations of the Gospel—and Christ, and salvation, and heaven are yours.

And for your encouragement we would say, that *the feeblest puttings forth of grace in the soul are indisputable evidences of the inward and effectual call of the Spirit*. If in the spring time I mark the gentle buddings of the costly plant, I rejoice, yet with trembling. The cold wind may blow and the hoar frost may light upon those buds, and so nip and kill those who they shall never burst into the beautiful and fragrant flower. But when I trace the buddings of grace in the heart of a poor sinner, when I observe the evidence of the Spirit's operation in the soul, I feel no misgiving, I cherish no fear, for I am assured that He who has begun the good work will carry it on and perfect it in glory. No worm shall kill its root, no frosts shall nip its leaf, no winds shall scatter its fruit, it shall never, never be destroyed. God will complete the work to which he puts his hand. Oh, precious truth, replete with encouragement to the sorrow-stricken, sin-burdened, Christ-seeking soul! Sweeter music is not heard in heaven than chimes in these words addressed to you—"Whoever comes to me I will never drive away."

Are we called? Then let us heed the earnest entreaty of the Apostle, "Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God." Let the lowliest and the highest vocation of life be dignified and sanctified by the heavenly calling. Wherever you are, and in whatever engaged, forget not your high calling of God. You are called to be saints; called to a separation from the world; called to a holy, heavenly life; called to live for God, to labor for Christ; and soon will be called to be with the Lord forever!

## **CHAPTER 28.**

### **"Free Justification"**

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called,

**them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. Romans 8:30**

**And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. Romans 8:30**

**And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And he gave them right standing with himself, and he promised them his glory. Romans 8:30**

**Such is the third link in this golden chain of heavenly truth. Those whom God appoints unto salvation, he as certainly calls by his effectual grace; and those whom he thus calls by his Spirit, he as certainly justifies through his Son. As we are not composing a treatise on the doctrine of Justification, we must assume it as divinely revealed, restricting ourselves, in the present instance, to a simple and brief presentation of the truth, as it forms an essential step in the believer's progress from condemnation to glory. "Whom he called, them he also justified."**

**Of the necessity of justification, we need not speak at great length. If there is no condemnation where justification is attained, it follows that where there is not the condition of justification, the law must be left to take its full effect. But the very provision proves the necessity. Had it been possible for our fallen race to have recovered their former state of holiness and consequent Divine acceptance by an expedient of their own invention, do we think that God would have provided a way of justification so costly or so stupendous as that which the Gospel reveals? The utter incapacity of the sinner to justify himself, left the way open for the display of God's infinite wisdom, holiness, and grace. The theater was prepared for the development of his great and grand expedient of justifying the sinner, and yet remaining truly, unbendingly, and unimpeachably just. But not upon man's inability to justify himself rests alone the necessity of a Divine method of justification, but mainly upon the nature of God's moral government. As a holy God, he can only consistently pardon and justify upon the basis of a righteousness which fully sustains the purity of his nature, the majesty of his law, and the glory of his entire moral government. Here are the two extremes of being—the holy, condemning Lord God, and the unholy and condemned sinner. It is proposed that they should meet as upon an equal footing, and that perfect reconciliation and peace should eternally be established between them. But upon what basis? Without a mediating plan, how shall this be effected? God is under a most free necessity to maintain the dignity of his throne, the holiness of his nature, and**

the righteousness of his law. If he would justify the sinner upon the ground of mere mercy, apart from a full satisfaction to the Divine government, what would become of his justice and his holiness? and with what truth could it be affirmed that "he is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot (not will not, but cannot) look on iniquity?" If, then, man is saved, if the sinner is justified, if the condemned is acquitted, it is most clear that it must be upon the basis of an atonement that should not compromise the righteousness of the Divine government, but should so harmonize all the attributes of God, so meet all the claims of justice and holiness and truth, as shall enable Mercy to walk upon the high battlements of his grace, waving her olive-branch of peace in view of a revolted and guilty world. Such an expedient has been devised, such a basis has been provided, such an atonement has been made. We now approach nearer to the subject before us.

The term is forensic—employed in judicial affairs, transacted in a court of judicature. We find an illustration of this in God's Word—"If there be a controversy between men, and they come into judgment, that the judge may judge them, then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked." It is clear from this passage that the word stands opposed to a state of condemnation, and in this sense it is employed in the text under consideration. To justify, in its proper and fullest sense, is to release from all condemnation. Now it is important that we do not mix up this doctrine, as the Church of Rome has done, with other and kindred doctrines. We must clearly distinguish it from that of sanctification. Closely connected as they are, they yet entirely differ. The one is a change of state, the other a change of condition. By the one we pass from guilt to righteousness, by the other we pass from sin to holiness. In justification we are brought near to God; in sanctification we are made like God. The one places in before him in a condition of non-condemnation; the other transforms us into his image. Yet the Church of Rome blends the two states together, and in her formularies teaches an imputed sanctification, just as the Bible teaches an imputed justification. It is to be distinguished, too, from pardon. Justification is a higher act. By the act of pardon we are saved from hell; but by the decree of justification, we are brought to heaven. The one discharges the soul from punishment; the other places in its hand a title-deed to glory. But the main question relates to the method of God's justification. And this is a point of vital moment. The Lord Jesus Christ is emphatically the justification of all the predestined and called people of God. "By him all that believe are justified from all things." "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." The antecedent step was to place himself in the exact

position of his church. In order to do this, it was necessary that he should be made under the law; for as the Son of God, he was above the law, and could not therefore be amenable to its precept. But when he became the Son of man, it was as though the sovereign of a vast empire had relinquished his regal character for the condition of the subject. He, who was superior to all law, by his mysterious incarnation placed himself under the law. He who was the King of Glory, became by his advent the lowest of subjects. "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those who were under the law." What a stoop was this! What a descending of the Son of God from the height of his glory! The King of kings, the Lord of lords, consenting to be brought under his own law, a subject to himself, the law-Giver becoming the law-Fulfiller. Having thus humbled himself, he was prepared, as the sacrificial Lamb, to take up and bear away the sins of his people. The prophecy that predicted that he should "bear their iniquities," and that he should "justify many," received in him its literal and fullest accomplishment. Thus upon Jesus were laid all the iniquities, and with the iniquities the entire curse, and added to the curse, the full penalty belonging to the Church of God. This personal and close contact with sin affected not his moral nature; for that was essentially sinless, and could receive no possible taint from his bearing our iniquity. He was accounted "accursed," even as was Israel's goat, when upon its head Aaron laid the sins of the people; but as that imputation of sin could not render the animal to whom it was transferred morally guilty, though by the law treated as such, so the bearing of sin by Christ could not for a single instant compromise his personal sanctity. With what distinctness has the Spirit revealed, and with what strictness has he guarded, the perfect sinlessness of the atoning Savior! "He has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Oh, blessed declaration to those who not only see the sin that dwells in them, but who trace the defilement of sin in their holiest things, and who lean alone for pardon upon the sacrifice of the spotless Lamb of God! To them, how encouraging and consolatory the assurance that there is a sinless One who, coming between a holy God and their souls, is accepted in their stead, and in whom they are looked upon as righteous! And this is God's method of justification. By a change of place with the Church, Christ becomes the "Lord our Righteousness," and we are "made the righteousness of God in him." There is the transfer of sin to the innocent, and in return, there is the transfer of righteousness to the guilty. In this method of justification no violence whatever is done to the moral government of God. So far from a shade obscuring its glory, that glory beams forth with an effulgence which must have remained forever veiled, but for the

redemption of man by Christ. God never appears so like himself as when he sits in judgment upon the person of a sinner, and determines his standing before him upon the ground of that satisfaction to his law rendered by the Son of God in the room and stead of the guilty. Then does he appear infinitely holy, yet infinitely gracious; infinitely just, yet infinitely merciful. Love, as if it had long been panting for an outlet, now leaps forth and embraces the sinner; while justice, holiness, and truth gaze upon the wondrous spectacle with infinite complacence and delight. And shall we not pause and bestow a thought of admiration and gratitude upon him, who was constrained to stand in our place of degradation and woe, that we might stand in his place of righteousness and glory? What wondrous love! What stupendous grace! that he should have been willing to have taken upon him our sin, and curse, and woe. The exchange to him how humiliating! He could only raise us, by himself stooping. He could only emancipate us, by wearing our chain. He could only deliver us from death, by himself dying. He could only invest us with the spotless robe of his pure righteousness, by wrapping around himself the leprous mantle of our sin and curse. Oh, how precious ought he to be to every believing heart! What affection, what service, what sacrifice, what devotion, he deserves at our hands! Lord, incline my heart to yield itself supremely to you!

But in what way does this great blessing of justification become ours? In other words, what is the instrument by which the sinner is justified? The answer is at hand. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus: whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through *faith* in his blood." Faith, and faith alone, makes this righteousness of God ours. "By him all that believe are justified." And why is it solely and exclusively by faith? The answer is again at hand "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." Were justification through any other medium than by believing, then the perfect freeness of the blessing would not be secured. The expressions are, "Justified freely by his grace;" that is, gratuitously—absolutely for nothing. Not only was God in no sense whatever bound to justify the sinner; but the sovereignty of his law, as well as the sovereignty of his love, alike demanded that, in extending to the sinner the greatest boon of his government, he should do so upon no other principle than as a perfect act of grace on the part of the Giver, and as a perfect gratuity on the part of the recipient having "nothing to pay." Therefore, whatever is associated with faith in the matter of the sinner's justification—whether it be Baptism, or any other rite, or any work or condition performed by the creature—renders the act entirely void and of none effect. The justification of the believing sinner is as free as the God of

love and grace can make it.

**Yet more: Faith is not only the instrument by which we receive a free grace justification, but it harmonizes the outward act of God with the inward feelings of the believing heart. Thus in justification the heart of the Justifier and the heart of the justified beat in the most perfect and holy unison. It is not a stupendous act on the part of God meeting no response on the part of man. Oh no! the believer's heart flows out in gratitude after God's heart, traveling towards him in the mightiness and majesty of its saving love; and thus both meet in Christ, the one Mediator between God and man. Here the believer is conscious of a vital union with his justifying Lord. He feels he is one with Christ. The righteousness wrought out, is by faith wrought in, and that faith is the uniting grace of a real, personal union between the justified soul, and a risen, living Savior. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." Oh close and blessed union! Justified by God, accepted in Christ, condemnation there cannot be. I stand in the Divine presence as Joshua stood before the Lord, or as the woman stood before the Savior, charged, accused, guilty; but I am in the presence of him who, though now he sits upon the throne as my Judge, once hung upon the cross as my Savior. And, investing me with his own spotless robe, he proceeds to pronounce the sentence—"No Condemnation!" "These things write I unto you that your joy may be full."**

**In conclusion, while this subject, as we thus see, lays the basis of the deepest joy, it is equally promotive of the highest holiness. Some have thought that a link were lacking in the chain of truth we are contemplating, because no specific mention is made of sanctification. But this is not really the case. The apostle does not deem it necessary to say that, he "whom God justifies he also sanctifies," simply because in the preceding verse he had already in the strongest manner affirmed that God's people were predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son. And what were this but the very highest order of sanctification? No sinner can be pardoned and justified without the implantation in his soul by the Holy Spirit of the germ of holiness; so that the "path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day." Fully and freely, and forever justified, Oh, how powerful the motive to yield ourselves unto God! "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."**

**We must learn to discriminate between our justified state, and the existence of indwelling sin. The one does not necessarily involve the present annihilation of**

the other. And by not clearly discerning the difference, many of God's people are exposed to great distress of mind. Let us, to illustrate the case, suppose an act of free pardon transmitted from the sovereign to a condemned criminal, slowly sinking beneath the ravages of a fatal disease. He passes out of his cell, delivered indeed from a humiliating and painful death, but bearing with him a hidden worm that feeds at the very root of the vital principle. Thus is it with the justified. They have "no condemnation" written as with beams of light upon their tranquil brow. Yet they bear about within their souls a moral disease, which shall not cease to work and distress until they lay down the body of sin and death, and wake up perfected in the likeness of their Lord.

## **CHAPTER 29.**

### **"Eternal Glorification"**

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. Romans 8:30

And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. Romans 8:30

And having chosen them, he called them to come to him. And he gave them right standing with himself, and he promised them his glory. Romans 8:30

Such is the last in the regular sequence of truths which, in the unfolding of this verse, we have been contemplating. It would appear that there are two links in this marvellous chain, the purpose of God, and its final consummation; both so remote and invisible as to bring the mind to a calm, unquestioning belief in certain doctrines of God's Word which may more properly belong to the "deep things of God." But while the two extremes of this chain of truths must for the present be left invisibly locked in God's hand, we have endeavored to convince the perplexed and inquiring reader that there are certain intermediate and visible links upon which, if he lay hold, he shall be saved, though all the rest remains wrapped in the profoundest mystery—like its Divine Author, dwelling in lone and unapproachable grandeur. It is not essential to our salvation, that we lift the veil of that awful mystery, and penetrate the depths of a past predestination, and a future glory; but it is essential to our salvation that we are called of God, and that by God we are

justified. We may arrive at heaven without fathoming the awful profound of the one extreme, and with but twilight views of the magnificence spreading over all the other; but we cannot get to heaven without the Spirit's grace, and Christ's righteousness. Grasp in faith, and receive into your heart, these two central and essential truths, and they will by and by lift you into a sunnier region, where all the rest will stand forth, clear and transparent, bathed in the noontide splendor of heaven's own glory.

Before we show in what the future glorification of the saints will consist, and trace the influence of this truth upon the present life, it may be proper to speak of the certainty of the fact, that he who justifies his people will also assuredly glorify them. Final and eternal glorification is the grand end and consummation of all God's purposes of love towards his Church; and we may therefore expect that this truth should be revealed in his word with a distinctness and clearness commensurate with its importance and greatness. Nor will this expectation be disappointed—for around no single fact of the Bible does there gather a larger accumulation of demonstrative evidence than that of the certain glorification of all who are "accepted in the Beloved."

We find some clear revealings of this truth in the Old Testament writings. To a comparatively obscure saint of God, yet honored to be the parent of one of Israel's mightiest prophets—the mother of Samuel—a striking view of the saint's future exaltation was given: "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." See how this same truth beamed in upon the troubled mind of Asaph, diffusing over his perplexed and perturbed spirit, the luster and serenity of a sunlight calmness: "If You shall guide me with your counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." "Afterwards—when life's storms are over, and its perils are passed, and its voyage is closed, and its work is finished—after having done and suffered your holy will here on earth—you will receive me to glory." Passing by other unfoldings of the future glory of the saints in the Old Testament, let us glance at a few proofs found in the writings of the New Testament. The apostle, referring to his own experience, says, "I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." Thus clear is it, that the salvation secured to us by Christ is inseparable from future glory; so that he who is saved now, evidencing the truth of his salvation by his holy life, is saved forever—"Salvation in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory." We find, too, that *future glory is connected with present calling*. "That they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." Oh, what a high

calling, then, is ours! Called to be saints now—and called to glory hereafter. Glory is also secured by our justification. "For if when we were enemies; we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." But the inferential evidence of the certain glorification of the saints is not less conclusive. Their union with the Lord Jesus secures it. "Christ in you, the hope of glory." "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." Christ dwelling in us is our heaven below, and to dwell with Christ will be our heaven above. And thus our vital union to Christ, secures our eternal glorification with Christ. If Christ is emphatically our life, then we must be where our life is. This, too, was his prayer. "Father, I will that they also, whom you have given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." And what are the various tracings of the Spirit's work but the foreshadowings of the coming glory in the soul? "The Lord will give grace and glory." The two are inseparable. They are indeed essential parts of each other. Grace is the germ of glory, glory is the full-blown flower of grace. Grace is the first degree of glory—glory is the highest degree of grace. And what are the saints of God but the precious vessels of mercy afore prepared unto glory? Purified from all alloy, refined from all imperfection, those vessels of silver and gold are arranged, each in its appointed place, in the Father's house, filled to overflowing with its glory. The essential relation of grace and glory is one of the most animating and consolatory truths upon which the Christian mind can repose. Musing in mournful recollection of the loved ones who have gently broken from our embrace and disappeared within the parted veil, does the painful doubt at times cross the mind as to their safety? Do you wonder, as you yearn for a surer evidence, whether Christ was with them in the shadowy valley, and whether they are now with Christ in the regions of light and glory beyond it? See here the evidence. Did you discern the faintest dawn of heavenly light in the soul? Did you observe the tenderest buddings of grace in the heart? Did you mark any of the first fruits of the Spirit as exhibited in the life? Was it a hand that tremblingly touched the border, an eye that dimly beheld the cross, a heart that mourned, and wept, and loved at the Savior's feet? Then, sorrow not—they are safe in glory! The least measure of grace, the smallest degree of faith, will have brought them there. O yes! all whom God justifies, he glorifies. Once invested with the righteousness of Christ, they are robed for the wedding, and at the marriage-supper of the Lamb they shall most assuredly appear.

And now, what are some of the elements of the future and eternal glory of the saints? On this subject there has been much vain speculation; but there need

not be, since the outline of heaven's happiness and employments is so distinctly drawn in the Word of God. To this outline let us briefly refer.

**The expansion and perfection of the intellectual faculties will result in a consequent enlargement and perfection of knowledge.** This is no inferior element of the future happiness of the redeemed. All that is gracious and sanctifying in the soul of the believer has its basis in a certain degree of spiritual knowledge. The mind is the medium through which the first communications of the Spirit are received. A knowledge of ourselves has led to a knowledge of Christ; and a knowledge of Christ has laid the foundation of all the joy, and peace, and hope, the soul has experienced. And as our spiritual knowledge increases—the mind becoming more and more informed in Divine truth—there is a corresponding and proportioned increase of the blessing which an experimental acquaintance with the truth yields. Now, if this be so here, what must it be in the glorified state? Think we not that it will greatly augment the happiness and deepen the glory of the saints in heaven, that in their enlarged mental capacity, in the fullest development of their intellectual powers, they shall be enabled to take a wider range of thought? That they shall compass a greater knowledge of God, and see infinitely more of the glory, and drink infinitely deeper of the love, of Christ, than the most exalted angel in heaven? What, if in the present school of God—often the school of deep trial—as we advance from truth to truth, knowing more of Jesus, and increasing in the knowledge of God, we grow more holy and more happy; our peace flowing like a river, and our righteousness as the waves of the sea; our confidence in God strengthening, and our affections entwining more fondly and closely around the Savior—What, we ask, will be the glory deepening around us when all the present obstructions and impediments to our advancement in spiritual knowledge are removed, and our intellectual faculties, then unclouded and unfettered, expand their long-folded wings, and sweep an infinite circle of knowledge—knowing even as we are known? If our progress in spiritual knowledge is an accession to our happiness here, what hereafter will be the happiness rushing into our glorified souls through the medium of an enlarged mind, vast as its range of thought, and pure and transparent as the atmosphere in which it floats? Do not deem it, then, O expectant of heaven, an inferior element of the glory that awaits you, that your intellectual enjoyment, perfect in its nature, shall ever be augmenting in its degree. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

But a still higher element will be, the **perfect holiness** of the glorified. The very

utterance of the thought seems to awaken music in the soul. Seeing Christ as he is, and knowing him as we are known, we also shall be like him. Perfected in holiness! Oh, what a conception! what a thought! No more elements of evil working like leaven in the soul. No more traces and fetters of corruption. No more evil heart of unbelief, perpetually departing from God. No more desperate depravity. No more sin warring within, and no more temptation assailing from without. All is perfect holiness now! The outline of the Divine image is complete, for the believer has awakened in the finished likeness of his Lord. The spirit of the just man is made perfect. Oh, is there not enough in this anticipation to make us long to be there? What now shades your spirit, and embitters your joy, and suffuses your eyes with tears, and inflicts the keenest pang? Not adversity, nor sickness, nor changed affection, nor blighted hopes, nor the shaded landscape of life, nor the hollow falling of the earth as the grave closes from your view the heart's fond treasure. Oh, no, not these! It is the sin that dwells in us! Extirpate all sin, and you have erased all sorrow. Complete the grace, and you have perfected the glory. You then have chased all sadness from the heart, and have dried all tears from the eye. That glory will be the glory of unsullied purity. Nothing of sin remains but its recollection; and that recollection but heightens our conception of the preciousness of the blood that shall have effaced every stain, and of the greatness and sovereignty of that grace which shall have brought us there. "Let the saints be joyful in glory," for their battle with sin is over. "These are they which follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." The absence of all evil will be another feature of the coming glory. Take the long catalogue of ills we suffer here—the cares that corrode, the anxieties that agitate, the sorrows that depress, the bereavements that wound, the diseases that waste, the temptations that assail—in a word, whatever pains a sensitive mind, or wounds a confiding spirit; the rudeness of some, the coldness of others, the unfaithfulness and heartlessness of yet more; and as you trace the sad list, think of glory as the place where not one shall enter. All, all are entirely and eternally absent. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

The presence of all good will take the place of the absence of all evil. And in the foreground of this picture of glory we place the full, unclouded vision of Jesus. Oh, this is the Sun that will bathe all other objects in its beams. We see him now through faith's telescope, and how lovely does he appear! Distant

and dim as is the vision, yet so overpowering is its brightness as for a moment to eclipse every other object. How near he is brought to us, and how close we feel to him! Encircled and absorbed by his presence, all other beings seem an intrusion, and all other joys an impertinence. Reposing upon his bosom, how sweetly sounds his voice, and how winning his language, "Oh, my dove, you are in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs let me see your countenance, let me hear your voice; for sweet is your voice, and your countenance is lovely." These are happy moments. But oh, how transient and how brief their stay! Some earthly vapor floats athwart our glass, and the bright and blissful vision is gone—veiled in clouds, it has disappeared from our view! But not lost is that vision. Not withdrawn is that Object. As stars that hide themselves awhile, then appear again in brighter, richer luster, so will return each view we have had of Christ. The eye that has once caught a view of the Savior shall never lose sight of him forever. Long and dreary nights may intervene; the vision may tarry as though it would never come again, yet those nights shall pass away, and that vision shall return and "we shall see him as he is." And oh, if the distant and fitful glimpses of the glorified Christ are now so ravishing, what will the ecstatic and overpowering effect of the full unclouded vision be, when we shall see him face to face!

With this unveiled sight of the glorified Redeemer, will be associated the certain reunion and perfected communion of all the glorified saints. We are far from placing this feature of glory in an obscure corner of our picture of heavenly happiness. A source of so much pure and hallowed enjoyment now, surely will not be lacking, nor be less limited hereafter. It is a high enjoyment of earth—that of sanctified relationships and sacred friendships. The communion of renewed intellect, the union of genial minds, and the fellowship of fond and sympathizing hearts, God sometimes kindly vouchsafes, to smooth and brighten our rough and darksome path to the grave. And yet even were this all lacking, Jesus were enough to illumine the gloom, and people the solitude of the desert we traverse. But death interposes and sunders these precious ties. And are they sundered forever? Oh, no! We shall meet again all from whom in faith and hope we parted—whom we loved in Jesus—and who in Jesus have fallen asleep. "For we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved even as they." Heartbreaking as was the separation, it was not final, nor will it be long. The time-piece we wear reminds us at each second that the period of our reunion is nearing. Yes! we shall meet them again in closer, fonder, purer friendship. They wait and watch our coming. Think not that they forget us: that cannot be. Thinking of us, they love us still. The affection they cherished for us here, death did not

chill; they bore that affection with them from the earthly to the heavenly home, and now, purified and expanded, it glows and clings with an intensity unknown, unfelt before. Heavenly thought is immortal. Holy love never dies. Meeting, we shall know them again; and knowing, we shall rush into their warm embrace, and sever from them never! "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you sorrow not, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Oh, what a soothing, sanctifying thought—what a heaven-attracting hope is this! Applied to the holy dead, how touching and how true the beautiful sentiments of the poet, himself now mingling with the beings of the spirit-land:

"Is it not sweet to think hereafter,  
When the spirit leaves this sphere,  
Love, with deathless wings, shall waft her  
To those she long has mourned for here?  
"Hearts from which 'twas death to sever;  
Eyes, this world can never restore;  
There, as warm, as bright as ever,  
Shall meet us, and be lost no more!  
"When wearily we wander, asking  
Of earth and heaven, where are they,  
Beneath whose smile we once lay basking,  
Blest, and thinking bliss would stay?  
"Hope still lifts her radiant finger,  
Pointing to the eternal home,  
Upon whose portal still they linger,  
Looking back for us to come.  
"Alas, alas! does hope deceive us  
Shall friendship, love, shall all those ties  
That bind a moment, and then leave us,  
Be found again where nothing dies?  
"Oh, if no other hope were given,  
To keep our hearts from wrong or stain,  
Who would not seek to reach a heaven,  
Where all we love shall live again?"

We cannot consent to dismiss this contemplation of the coming glory, without an allusion to the Scripture teaching in reference to what has been termed the degrees of glory. It is but little that is said upon the subject, yet that little is

interesting and instructive; and we should remember that no truth of God's mind, however obscurely revealed, ought to be overlooked. The Apostle thus figuratively advances the idea, "One star differs from another star in glory." But in what will this disproportion of glory consist? We cannot adopt the idea of some, that it will be according to the difference of gift; that the scale of heavenly happiness will be the measure of mental endowment; that Newton, the great philosopher, for example, with his gigantic intellect and vast resources, will necessarily be more richly replenished with glory than another of more limited acquirements and less mental capacity. This would resolve the happiness of the heavenly world mainly into the purely intellectual rather than the purely spiritual, of which we believe it to consist. If there are degrees of glory—and we see no reason to question the fact—we believe that those degrees will be graduated, not by the strength or capacity of the intellect, but *according to the measure and standard of holiness which the believer attained in this life*. If, as we have shown, *glory is the perfection of grace*, then it follows, that proportioned to the degree of grace here, will be the degree of glory hereafter. It must be borne in mind that God is not merely an intellectual, he is also a spiritual Being. As an intellectual Being, the unfallen angels, creatures of mightier intellect than we, must be supposed to form the most lofty conceptions of his greatness and grandeur. But will it be supposed that an angel's mind can form such a conception of the Divine glory, as the recovered, renewed, and sanctified soul of fallen man? Will not that mind that has been brought into closer contact, and union, and sympathy with the will, the heart, and the perfections of God, know more of God, drink in deeper views of the glory of God, than the mind of the angel who in his study of redemption could but bend over the Mercy Seat, his wings encircled, desiring to look within its awful mysteries? If the great and grand perfection of God be his holiness, then the more clearly I approximate to that holiness, the more deeply must I partake of the glory of God, and the higher must be my degree of glory. It is acquaintance with, and conformity to, God's moral, and not his intellectual being, that will constitute the highest source of our happiness in heaven. That our enlarged intellectual capacity will be a vast inlet to expanded views of God, we do not dispute; but it will be the conformity of our moral nature to his that will constitute and augment our perceptions of glory.

If it is not thus, that the spiritual and not the mental will form the standard of our happiness in the glorified state, how is it that the astronomer whose mind had been overwhelmed with the wisdom and grandeur of God in creation, could descend from his observatory with an oath upon his lips? Yet such is known to have been the fact. Imagine that mind suddenly transported to

heaven, and placed in the immediate and glorified presence of that God whose works of nature it had been contemplating, and yet whose holy name it had profaned—if the argument be true that the amount of glory will be proportioned to the mental capacity of the glorified, then it follows that that 'undevout astronomer' would be more capable, even with an unrenewed intellect, of understanding and knowing God than the unlettered Christian, whose intellect was of the most dwarfish capacity, but who yet spiritually knew God and Jesus Christ whom he had sent. Were we asked to pass through the Church of God, and from its various communions select the individual whom we should regard as the richest heir of glory, whose degree of happiness would, perhaps, transcend that of the glorified philosopher, we should, it may be, find him the inmate of some obscure hut, dwelling amid lonely poverty, sickness, and neglect; and yet holding communion with God, so filial, so endearing, and so close, as to present to our eye his soul's uplifted and soaring pinions, "as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." We would go to him whose heart thus breathing after holiness, whose spirit thus imbibing more and more of the mind of Christ, who in this lowly and suffering school was learning more deeply of God, and what God is, and who thus was gathering around him the beams of that glory whose unclouded visions were so soon to burst upon his view—and we would unhesitatingly point to him as the man whose degree of glory will be transcendently great—grace enriching and encircling him with more glory than gift. Do you, my reader, desire to be a star of the first magnitude and luster in heaven? then aim after a high degree of grace on earth. "There is not," says the Savior, "a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John." The nearer your present walk with God, the nearer will be your future proximity to God. The closer your resemblance to Christ, the deeper your holiness, the more spiritual and heavenly-minded you become on earth, be assured of this, the higher and the more resplendent will be your glory in heaven. As the ungodly man is treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and is growing more and more fit for hell—so the godly man is laying up glory against the day of glory, and is growing more and more fit for heaven. We need not speculate and surmise about the future. Let the child of God be careful as to his degrees towards fitness for glory, and he may calmly and safely leave his degrees of glory to the period when that glory shall be revealed.

But we must not overlook, in this outline of the coming glory, the glorified body of the saints. The first resurrection will give back this 'vile body' so changed that it shall be "fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body." We have

two examples of what this "glorious body" of our Lord is. The first was at his transfiguration, when the "fashion of his countenance was altered, and his face did shine as the sun, and his clothing was white as the light." The second was when he appeared to John, in Patmos, arrayed in such glory that the apostle says, "When I saw him I fell at his feet as dead." Fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body will be the glorified bodies of the saints. No deformity, no wrinkle, no defect whatever, shall mar its beauty. "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

What, in conclusion, ought to be the practical influence of this animating subject? Should it not, in the first place, urge us with all diligence to "make our calling and election sure?" With all affectionate earnestness, we would exhort the reader to seek to be assured of his standing in Christ. Are you called? Are you justified? Do you know that God loves you? Has the great change taken place? Have you, in a word, passed from death unto life? Do not postpone these questions to a dying bed. Answer them now.

And is not the anticipation of the coming glory most sanctifying? Ought it not to have so powerful an influence upon our minds as to lessen the value of the things that are seen and temporal, and enhance the value of those things which are unseen and eternal? We are at present in a state of *children* under tutors and governors. But before long we shall attain our full age, and shall be put in possession of our inheritance. And because we are children, we are apt to think as children, and speak as children, and act as children—magnifying things that are really small, while diminishing those that are really great. Oh, how little, lowly, and despicable will, by and by, appear the things that now awaken so much thought, and create so much interest! Present sorrows and joys, hopes and disappointments, gains and losses—will all have passed away, leaving not a ripple upon the ocean they once agitated, nor a footprint upon the sands they once traversed. "Men forget what they were in their youth, or at best only partially remember it; it is hard even for those whose memories are strongest and liveliest to put themselves exactly into the same position in which they stood as boys; they can scarcely fancy that there was once a time when they cared so much for pleasures and troubles which now seem so trifling. And it may be, that if we rise hereafter to angels' stature; if wisdom be ours such as we dream not of; if being counted worthy to know

God as he is, the poorness of all created pleasures shall be revealed to us, flashing upon our uncreated spirits like light—it may be that we shall then feel it as hard to fancy how we could have cared for what we now deem most important; how twenty years, more or less, taken from this span of our earthly life; how being parted for a few years, more or less, from those dear friends with whom we are now united forever—how this could have seemed of any importance to beings born for immortality. It is quite reasonable to suppose that the interests of manhood will hereafter appear to us just as insignificant, I ought rather to say ten thousand times more so, than the interests of our boyish years seem to us now." (Arnold). Why, then, allow our white garments to trail upon the earth? If glory is before us, and so near, why so slow in our advance to meet it? Why so little of its present possession in our souls? Why do we allow the "bright and Morning Star" to sink so often below the horizon of our faith? Why, my soul, so slow to arrive at heaven, with heaven so full in view? Oh, to press our pillow at night, composed to slumber with this sweet reflection "Lord, if I open my eyes no more upon the rising sun, I shall open them upon that risen sun that never sets—awaking in your likeness." Oh, to be looking for, and hastening unto, the coming of the Lord, that blessed hope, that glorious epiphany of the church, which shall complete, perfect, and consummate the glorification of the saints.

How should the prospect of certain glory stimulate us to individual exertion for Christ! What a motive to labor! *With a whole eternity of rest, how little should we think of present toil and fatigue for the Savior!* Shall we, then, be indolent in our Master's cause? Shall we, in selfishness, wrap our graces as a mantle around us, and indolently bury our talents in the earth? Shall we withhold our property from the Lord, complaining that the calls of Christian benevolence are so many, the demands so pressing, and the objects so numerous? Oh, no! It cannot, it must not be. Let us live for Christ—labor for Christ—suffer for Christ—and, if needs be, die for Christ—since we shall, before long and forever, be glorified with Christ. And who can paint that glory? "So much as moments are exceeded by eternity, and the sighing of a man by the joys of an angel, and a salutary frown by the light of God's countenance, a few frowns by the infinite and eternal hallelujahs, so much are the sorrows of the godly to be undervalued in respect of what is deposited for them in the treasures of eternity. Their sorrows can die; but so cannot their joys. And if the blessed martyrs and confessors were asked concerning their past sufferings and their present rest, and the joys of their certain expectation, you should hear them glory in nothing but in the mercies of God, and in the cross of the Lord Jesus. Every chain is a ray of light, and every prison is a

palace, and every loss is the purchase of a kingdom, and every affront in the cause of God is an eternal honor, and every day of sorrow is a thousand years of comfort, multiplied with a never-ceasing numeration—days without nights, joys without sorrow, sanctity without sin, charity without stain, possession without fear, society without envyings, communication of joys without lessening; and they shall dwell in a blessed country, where an enemy never entered, and from where a friend never went away. " (Jeremy Taylor)

## **CHAPTER 30.**

### **"God Is for Us"**

**What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31**

**What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31**

**What can we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Romans 8:31**

The Apostle had concluded the sublime argument which, with so much consecutiveness of reasoning, and power of language, he had been pursuing. And now he comes to the inference logically deducible from the whole. "What shall we say to these things? To what conclusion shall we arrive, touching the power of the gospel to support and console us in all our assaults and sufferings?" Then, proceeding to answer his own question, he resolves the blessed results of the entire argument into a single, animating, and comprehensive one—GOD IS FOR US! "If God be for us, who can be against us?" The question supposes the existence of a combined and powerful hostility to the Christian. Let this, briefly, be our first point of consideration.

To establish this fact, no lengthened proof is necessary. The Bible declares it—observation confirms it—and experience demonstrates it. There is, in fact, no possible form of evil—no machinations of the powers of darkness—not a single one of the noxious principles indigenous to our fallen nature, which is not in direct and deadly antagonism to the best interests of the child of God. The believer may be compared to an individual who has thrown off allegiance to his king, has disowned his country, and refuses obedience to its laws, yet

continues to dwell in the land he has renounced, and close by the sovereign he has forsworn. The grace of God has called us out of the world; yet the providence of God has sent us into the world. We may, therefore, expect nothing but hostility from the god of this world, and hatred from the world itself. From these two sources, as from another, to which we may presently advert, strong opposition proceeds. There is much of mystery connected with the subject of satanic agency which we may never entirely comprehend. With a power and a ubiquity differing from Divine omnipotence and omnipresence in nothing but their reality, he sways a fearful scepter; and is everywhere, and at the same moment, accurately acquainted with every circumstance of our history, and, it would appear, with each hidden thought of the human heart. Satan is against us. All his force—all his wisdom—all his malice—all his subtlety and skill—and all his myrmidons, are exerted and marshaled in tremendous opposition to the interests of the child of God. Let the histories of David, and Job, and Joshua, and Paul, yes, of our Lord himself, testify to the truth of this. The world, too, is against us. It will never forgive the act by which we broke from its thralldom, renounced its sway, relinquished its pleasures, and resigned its friendship. Nor can it forget that the godly, self-denying, unearthly life of the Christian, is a constant and solemn rebuke of its worldliness, its irreligion, and its folly: "You are not of the world, therefore the world hates you." Sometimes veiling its opposition and concealing its malignity beneath smiles and flattery, it seeks to win back the votary it has lost. And when this effort proves unavailing, it changes its course, and, with venomous tongue, and sleepless zeal, and malignant hatred, seeks, by detraction and falsehood, to malign, and wound, and injure the sons of God. How touching the words of Jesus addressed to each disciple—"If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." But there is yet another source of opposition to the Christian. We utter but a home truth and a self-evident one, when we add to these forms of hostility—that of our own hearts! And after all that we have said, our most powerful and treacherous foe is this one which we cherish in our bosom. Oh, yes! the sin that dwells in us—"a heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"—the body of corruption and death which we bear about with us forms a source of opposition to our holiness and furtherance in the Divine life, as continuous and powerful, as it is humbling and distressing to our renewed nature. Truly, "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." With this mighty phalanx

opposed to him, is it not a marvel that any child of God should ever maintain his stand, and at last arrive at heaven? But the wonder ceases when our eye lights upon these words, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

To this great and consoling truth let us now direct our attention. We shall find, on examination, great prominence given to this fact—God on the side of the Christian—in his holy word. It was with this assurance that Jehovah calmed the fears and strengthened the faith of his servant Abraham. It was a period of intense anxiety with the patriarch. He had just achieved a signal victory in his battle with the kings, from whose power he had generously and valorously rescued his nephew, Lot. It was natural to expect that the nations whose armies he had defeated, and whose sovereigns he had slain, should collect their scattered forces, and, with renewed strength and a fresh onset, descend upon him with overwhelming force. Just at this juncture, when trouble was near, all anxious, and fearful, and trembling as he was, God appeared to his servant, and soothed him with these words—"Fear not, Abram: I am your *shield*, and your exceeding great reward." And all that God was to Abram he is to all those who have like precious faith with him. Christian, assailed and fearful! Jehovah is your "*shield*, and your exceeding great reward." Then, fear not! I ask not what your trouble is, what form of opposition assails you. I meet you—be your peril, be your trembling, be your anxiety, what it may—with this fact, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" And God is for you! Oh, but believe it, and all shall be perfect peace! His Divine shield is ever around you, and before you can be injured, that shield itself must be broken. This, too, was the truth with which God stayed the faith of Isaac. "And the Lord appeared unto him by night, and said, I am the God of Abraham your father: fear not, for I am with you." To the godly children of Christian, perhaps glorified parents, how peculiarly appropriate and precious are these words! It is an argument and a plea of no little power with God when a tried and needy Christian is led to pray, "You are the God of my parents, my father's God, faithful and loving. And since you did say to your servant, "I am the God of Abraham your father, fear not, I am emboldened in this time of necessity and fear to cast myself upon the same love, and faithfulness, power! Oh, turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give your strength unto your servant, and save the son of your handmaid." God's dealings with the prophet Elisha afford another striking illustration of the same precious truth, that he is on the side of his people. Alarmed at the overshadowing forces of the Syrian hosts, the servant of the prophet exclaims, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" And he answered, "Fear not: for those who be with us are more than those who be with them." Ah, yes! chariots of

fire encircle every believer; and, best of all, the Lord is in his chariot, "riding upon the heavens in their help, and in his excellency on the sky." It was in view of this same truth that David encouraged himself. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" And when God was about to send Jeremiah into his vineyard, what was the truth with which he strengthened his hesitating faith? "You therefore gird up your loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command you . . . they shall fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you; for I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you." And when Paul repaired to Corinth, and was met by much opposition and blasphemy in his mission of testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ, it was with this same blessed assurance—God on the side of the Christian—that his faith was strengthened and his spirit comforted. "Then spoke the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Do not be afraid, but speak, and hold not your peace; for I am with you, and no man shall set on you to hurt you." It was the Lord Jesus, who, in all the tenderness of his love, thus appeared to soothe and animate his servant. And since he is the "same yesterday, today, and forever," he is prepared to comfort our trembling hearts with the same blessed assurance—"I am with you." And what were his last words to his Church, still vibrating on the ear, "Lo! I am with you always; even unto the end!"

God must be on the side of his people, since he has, in an everlasting covenant, made himself over to be their God. In an especial manner, and in the highest degree, he is the God of his people. In the most comprehensive meaning of the words, he is for us. His love is for us—his perfections are for us—his covenant is for us—his government, extending over all the world, and his power over all flesh, is for us. There is nothing in God, nothing in his dealings, nothing in his providences, but what is on the side of his people. Enshrined in his heart, engraved on his hand, kept as the apple of his eye, God forms a mighty bulwark for his Church. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even forever." In Christ Jesus, holiness, justice, and truth, unite with mercy, grace, and love, in weaving an invincible shield around each believer. There is not a purpose of his mind, nor a feeling of his heart, nor an event of his providence, nor an act of his government, that is not pledged to the happiness, and security, and well-being of his people. What Joshua said to the children of Israel, trembling to encounter the giants of Anak, may be truly said to every believer in view of his foes, "The Lord is with us, fear them not."

Not the Father only, but the Son of God, is also on our side. Has he not amply

proved it? Who, when there was no eye to pity, and no arm to save, undertook our cause, and embarked all his grace and glory in our salvation? Who slew our great Goliath, and rescued us from Pharaoh, discharged our debt, and released us from prison? Who extinguished the fires of our hell, and kindled the glories of our heaven? Who did all this by the sacrifice of himself? Oh, it was Jesus! Need we further proof that he is for us? Who appears on our behalf within the veil? Who sits for us as a priest upon his throne? Whose blood, first shed on Calvary, now sprinkles the Mercy Seat? Who pleads, and argues, and intercedes, and prays for us in the high court of heaven? Whose human sympathy flows down in one continuous stream from that abode of glory, blending with our every trial, and suffering, and sorrow? Who is ever near to thwart our foes, and to pluck our feet from the snare of the fowler? Oh, it is Christ! And there is not a moment of time, nor a circumstance of life, in which he does not show himself strong in behalf of his people.

And so of the Holy Spirit. Who quickened us when we were dead in trespasses and in sins? Who taught us when we were ignorant, enlightened us when we were dark, comforted us when we were distressed; and when wounded, and bleeding, and ready to die, led us, all oppressed with guilt and sorrow as we were, to Jesus? Who inspired the first pulsation of life, and lighted the first spark of love, and created the first ray of hope, in our soul, and dried the first tear of godly grief from our eye? Oh, it was the Eternal Spirit, and he, too, is for us. Survey the record of your own history, dear reader. What a chequered life yours, perhaps, has been! How dotted the map of your journeyings, how multi-colored the stones that have paved your path, how varied and blended the hues that compose the picture of your life! And yet, God constructed that map, and God laid those stones, and God penciled and painted that picture. God went before you, and God is with you, and God is for you. He was in the dark cloud that enshrouded all with gloom, and he was in the sunshine that gilded all with beauty. "I will sing of mercy and of judgment: unto You, O Lord, will I sing." And who has carried forward the work of grace in our souls—checking our feet, restoring our wanderings, holding up our goings, raising us when we had fallen, and establishing our feet more firmly when men rose up against us? Who has healed all our diseases, and has filled our mouths with good things, so that our youth has been renewed like the eagle's? It was the Lord who was on our side, and not one good thing of all that he has promised has failed.

It may, then, well be asked, "Who can be against us?" With such a Father, such a Friend, and such a Comforter, who can urge a successful hostility to

the saints of God? God himself cannot be against us, even when the clouds of his *providence* appear the most lowering, and his strokes are felt to be the most severe. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." The *law* cannot be against him; for the Law-fulfiller has, by his obedience, magnified and made it honorable. Divine *justice* cannot be against us, for Jesus has, in our stead, met its demands, and his resurrection is a full discharge of all its claims. Nor sin, nor Satan, nor men, nor suffering, nor death, can be really or successfully against us—since the condemnation of sin is removed, and Satan is vanquished, and the ungodly are restrained, and suffering works for good, and the sting of death is taken away. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" With such a Being on our side, whom shall we fear? We will fear nothing but the disobedience that grieves, and the sin that offends him. Fearing this, we need fear nothing else. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not fear. Listen once more to his wondrous words—"You are my servant. I have called you, and not cast you away. Fear not; for I am with you: do not be dismayed; for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness."

The subject, if most consolatory to the Christian, in its converse, a solemn one to the unregenerate. It is an awful thing not to have God for us. And if God is not for us, there is no neutral course: he must be against us. And God is against you, my unconverted reader. So long as you are in an unreconciled state, not only God, but every creature of God, is at war with you. The whole creation is an armory of destructive agencies to a soul out of Christ. All are messengers of death to a Christless sinner. Yes, God is against you! Mistake not the blessings of his providence for the smiles of his grace. The hand that prospers your worldly schemes, that drops its mercies so profusely around your path, yet holds its drawn sword of vengeance above your head. Not a night do you compose yourself to rest at peace with God through Christ Jesus. And are you prepared for the consequences? Have you thought of them and weighed them? Look at them now! When your sorrow comes—as come it will—God will mock; when your calamity approaches, he will laugh; when you stretch forth your hand, he will withdraw his, so long stretched out to you in vain. Who will then befriend you? Not an angel or a saint but will tune his harp to the holiness and the justice of your condemnation. Alas! there is no appeal from the decision of the Judge, there is no hiding place from his indignation, no cessation of his wrath. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." And yet that God loves sinners, gave his Son to die for sinners, is willing to receive sinners, and is gracious, full of compassion,

and ready to forgive sinners. Let the goodness of God, then, lead you to repentance.

Would we always have God for us? then let us aim to be for God. God deals with us his creatures by an equitable rule. "The ways of the Lord are equal." "If you walk contrary unto me, then will I walk contrary unto you." Is not God for you? Has he not always, since he manifested himself to you as your covenant God, been on your side? Has he ever been a wilderness to you, a land of darkness? Has he, in any instance, been unkind, unfriendly, unfaithful? Never. Then be for God—decidedly, wholly, uncompromisingly for God. Your heart for God, your talents for God, your rank for God, your property for God, your influence for God, your all for God—a holy, unreserved consecration to him, all whose love, all whose grace, all whose perfections, all whose heaven of glory is for you. "Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead." Trembling Christian! God is on your side. And, "if God be for us, who can be against us?"

## **CHAPTER 31.**

### **"The Gift of God's Son, the Guarantee of All Other Blessing"**

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Romans 8:32

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Romans 8:32

Since God did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't God, who gave us Christ, also give us everything else? Romans 8:32

Each successive application which the Apostle makes of the great doctrine he had been so ably discussing, serves but more fully to unfold the glory and sweetness of the truth. We can scarcely light upon a passage in this brilliant and consolatory chapter, so rich and comprehensive as the present. Our admiration is divided between the vastness of the truth it contains, and the exquisite grace and appropriateness with which it is introduced. It was just the truth needed to give repose and enlargement to the mind, after threading its way through the mazes lucid, though profound—of God's predestinating purpose and plan. As if anticipating the cold, impassive view of God, which

some might be disposed to cherish, Paul introduces a fact which would at once dispel the false conception, vindicate the Divine character, and exhibit it in all the glow and effulgence of its infinite benevolence and love. There can be nothing contracted or frigid in the disposition of that Being who, from the fathomless depths of his nature, gave so costly a proof of his love as his Son. He must be love, if this is the manifestation of love. You have, it may be, deemed him partial and cold—you have thought him distant and repelling—you have settled down with the crude and gloomy notion, that because your lot was unchangeably fixed, believe as you may, and act as you will, it is of little purpose; and thus all your thoughts and efforts after salvation have become impeded and paralyzed, and you have resigned yourself to sinful, sullen despair. But lo! a truth bursts upon your mind, developing a new idea, and presenting to your view a new portrait of God, thus changing the whole current of your thoughts and feelings respecting him. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." "What a wondrous declaration!" you exclaim; "this surely is not that Being whom my conceptions pictured to my view so frigid, contracted, and arbitrary. He spared not his own Son! Is this true? Then, there is love in God; then, there is salvation in God; then, there is hope in God. I had thought him cold, unjust, and austere. But lo! he appears wearing the character of love—breathing the spirit of love—displaying the acts of love—and laying at my feet the most costly and precious boon of his love. O God, bow my heart before this unspeakable love of yours!"

"His own Son." We are here met with a great and glorious truth, the Sonship of our Lord. There may be much of mystery connected with it; nevertheless it is a revealed doctrine, and as such, we believe and are sure that it is true. With what clearness did Christ himself propound this doctrine to the caviling Jews! "Jesus answered them, My Father works hitherto, and I work. Therefore, the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." Now it must be borne in mind that this declaration of his Sonship involves also a declaration of equality in all respects with the Father. So the Jews evidently understood it. In a far different, because in a far higher and diviner sense, the Lord Jesus is declared to be the Son of God than believers, who are also denominated the "sons of God." The passage before us makes this distinction. "His own Son," a mode of expression peculiar to the essential relation of Christ to God. Just as a father would distinguish, by the same phraseology, his own son from the son he had adopted; so God distinguished his Eternal and Essential Son from his adopted sons. Christ is elsewhere called the "only-begotten Son of God," that is, the only one claiming so close an

affinity with the Father. And can the essential equality of the Son with the Father be more distinctly declared than in the quotation which the apostle makes from one of the Messianic Psalms, and applies it, as it originally was, to the Eternal Son of God: "Unto which of the angels said he at any time, You are my Son, this day have I begotten you? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he brings in the first-begotten into the world, he said, And let all the angels of God worship him." And if all the angels of God are commanded to worship him, surely then our Lord spoke no blasphemy when he "made himself equal with God."

God "spared not his own Son." Expressive words! Knowing what redemption required justice, stern and inexorable, demanding full satisfaction—the law, rigid and unbending, demanding perfect obedience—he withheld not the only sacrifice that could meet the case. "He spared not his own Son." He did not relax anything of the requirement, nor abate anything of the suffering. Oh no! the utmost payment was exacted, and the last drop of the cup was drained. Had there been the least relaxing of the law's stringency, or the slightest curtailment of the law's penalty, then there had been no salvation for us. And all this was the unveiling of love. To spare his people, he spared not his Son.

"Delivered him up for us all." If any other expression were necessary to deepen our sense of the vastness of his love, we have it here. Who delivered up Jesus to die? Not Judas, for money; not Pilate, for fear; not the Jews, for envy—but the Father, for love! "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." In this great transaction we lose sight of his betrayers, and his accusers, and his murderers, and we see only the Father travailing in the greatness of his love to his family. And to what was he delivered? To the hands of wicked men—God's "darling to the power of the dogs." To poverty and need, to contempt and infamy, to grief and sorrow, to unparalleled suffering, and a most ignominious death. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, he has put him to grief." And for whom was he thus delivered up? "For us all" for the church purchased with his own blood. For all in that church he has an equal love, and for all he paid an equal price. Oh, deem not yourself—poor, unlettered, and afflicted as you may be—less an object of the Father's love, and less the purchase of the Savior's merits. Oh, blessed, comforting truth—"For us all!" For you, who are tempted to interpret your afflictions as signals of wrath, and your sins as seals of condemnation, and your poverty as marks of neglect, and your seasons of darkness as tokens of desertion, and your doubts and fears as evidences of a false hope and of self-deception; for

you, dear saint of God, Jesus was delivered up.

And now let us consider this unspeakable gift of God as the guarantee of all other blessing. "How shall he not with him freely give us all things?" How beautiful and conclusive the reasoning of the Apostle! Arguing from the greater to the less, he proceeds to assure the believer of God's readiness freely to bestow all needful blessing. To this he stood pledged. The gift of his own Son, so freely and unreservedly bestowed, was the security and the channel of every other mercy. When God gave his Son, the reconciliation had not actually been effected, justice had received no satisfaction, and the broken law no repair. Thus, "God commended his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." If, then, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, will he freely give us all things. "All things!" How comprehensive the grant! "According as his Divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." Holding the security in the hand of faith, you may repair to your Heavenly Father, and ask for all that you need. So to speak, God has bound himself to withhold no good thing from you. He is pledged, and from that pledge he will never recede, to grant you all you need. What is your demand? Is it the Spirit to seal, to sanctify, to comfort you? Then draw near and ask the gift. "For if you who are evil know how to give good things to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?" Is it pardon? Then ask it. He who provided the sacrifice for sin, will he not freely bestow the forgiveness of sin? Is it grace? Having given you the Reservoir of grace, is he not as willing and "able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work?" Is it comfort? Having given you the "Consolation of Israel," will he not prove to you the "God of all comfort?" Is your necessity temporal? Are your circumstances adverse? Filled with forebodings of approaching difficulty, the cruse of oil and the barrel of meal dwindling, are you anxious and fearful? Take your temporal need to God. What! will he bestow the higher blessings of grace, and withhold the inferior ones of providence? Never! And can you press to your believing heart the priceless, precious, unspeakable gift of his Son, and yet cherish in that heart the gloomy, misgiving, thought of God's unwillingness and inability to supply all your need?

"Freely give." God's gifts are both rich and gratuitous. He always bestows more, never less, than we ask. It would seem as though he could not open his hand to a poor comer, but it overflowed with a bounty worthy of himself. Here are met all the objections to our coming which spring from our

unworthiness, unfruitfulness, and unfaithfulness. Having nothing to pay, nothing in return is required. "Without money, and without price." Free as the sunlight—free as the balmy air—free as the mountain stream—free as the heart of God can make it, is every blessing which he bestows. "Since God did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't God, who gave us Christ, also give us everything else?"

## **CHAPTER 32.**

### **"The Believer's Challenge"**

**Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Romans 8:33**

**Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Romans 8:33**

**Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? Will God? No! He is the one who has given us right standing with himself. Romans 8:33**

The Apostle recurs again to the great proposition with which he started—no condemnation in Christ Jesus—the evidence of which had so richly accumulated in his course, as to justify this, the keynote of the triumph with which he conducts his brilliant argument to a close. It is impossible not to perceive that his spirit kindles with the inspiration of his theme, until from the pinnacle on which he now stood, he seems to have caught an expanded view, and to reflect the first beams, of that heaven of glory from which he had so lately descended.

"God's elect." It was important that the Apostle should distinctly specify who the people were against whom no accusation could justly be alleged. And what terms could he employ more expressive of their character and relation than this? It involves two ideas—God's choice, of a people beloved. The term occurs in other places. "But for the elect's sake these days shall be shortened." "According to the faith of God's elect." "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." "His own elect." It is quite clear, then, that those on whose behalf this challenge is made, are a people who, like their Lord and Master, are "chosen of God and precious." Now, scriptural as this doctrine is, it cannot be concealed that many anxious minds have made it a stumbling-

stone at the very threshold of their spiritual career. The great mistake has been the making the doctrine of election the starting-point of their conversion, rather than a point to be reached at a subsequent and distant part of their religious course. With God it doubtless is the starting-point, if we may suppose a beginning with him who has no beginning—but not with man. We have in a previous chapter shown that our calling of God by the Spirit is the premise, and that our election of God by his love is the conclusion. Thus reasoning, as logicians term it, a posteriori, without having looked into the mysterious volume of the Divine decrees, the Apostle, addressing the converted Thessalonians, could boldly say, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." *And how did he know it? From their faith, their knowledge, their reception of the truth, and its transforming effects on their character.* Adopt this mode of reasoning as yours, and you will no longer complain that the doctrine of election is a perplexing truth, casting its deep and gloomy shadow upon your path to the cross. In your spiritual voyage your calling by grace is like an isthmus standing between two eternities; the past, in which God has chosen his people; and the future, in which he will glorify, them. Reach this middle point and you are safe.

"It is God that justifies." We believe that by many this cardinal doctrine of God's justification is but imperfectly understood, and but indistinctly seen in its results. The lofty position of security in which it places the believer, the liberty, peace, and hope into which it brings him, are points dim and obscure in the spiritual vision of many. We also believe that much of the weak, sickly Christianity of numbers is traceable, in a great measure, to the crude and gloomy conceptions they form of God, produced by not clearly seeing the interest which he felt, and the initiatory part which he took, in the great matter of our justification. Let our faith but trace the act of our justification to God, and we have placed ourselves upon a vantage-ground of the boldest defiance to all our enemies. Survey the truth in this light for a moment. Against whom have you sinned? Adopting David's confession, you exclaim, "Against you, and you only have I sinned." Having sinned against God, from God, then, you looked for the condemnation. You had violated his law, and from the lips of the Lawgiver you waited the sentence. When, lo! he declares himself on your side. Descending, as from his tribunal, he comes and stands in your place, and avows himself your Justifier. "It is GOD that justifies." Upon you, a culprit, trembling at his bar, he throws his own righteousness, "which is unto all, and upon all those who believe;" and from that moment you are justified. Shall we, then, be indifferent to the part the Father took in the great question of our acceptance? Shall we cherish the shy and suspicious thought

of God as if he looked coldly at us, and felt that, in pleading for his mercy, we were infringing upon his righteousness? Oh, no! Away with such thoughts of God! He it is who pronounces the act of your acquittal, and from his lips sound the glorious words, "No CONDEMNATION!" "It is God that justifies."

We are now prepared for the challenge based upon this truth. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Who in heaven; who on earth; who in hell? God will not; sin cannot; Satan dare not. Who? If there be in this wide universe an accuser of those whom God has justified, let him appear. There is none! Every mouth is closed. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" If there remain a sin unpardoned, a stain uneffaced, a precept unkept, by the Mediator of his church, let it appear. But there is none! The work of Christ is honorable and glorious. It is a finished work. And on the basis of this complete Atonement, God, while he remains just, is the justifier of him that believes. Oh, embrace this truth, you who, in bitterness of soul, are self-accused and self-condemned before God! Satan could accuse, and the world could accuse, and the saints could accuse, but more severe and true than all, is the self-accusation which lays your mouth in the dust, in the deepest, lowliest contrition. Yet, as a poor sinner, looking to Jesus, resting in Jesus, accepted in Jesus, who shall lay anything legally to your charge, since it is God—the God against whom you have sinned—who himself becomes your Justifier? May you not with all lowliness, yet with all holy boldness, challenge every foe, in the prophetic words of Christ himself—"He is near that justifies me: who will contend with me?"

This truth is an elevating, because a deeply sanctifying one. It exalts the principles, and these, in their turn, exalt the practice of the Christian. Oh! the thought, that it is God who justifies us at an expense to himself so vast, by a sacrifice to himself so precious, surely is sufficiently powerful to give the greatest intensity to our pantings, and fervency to our prayers, for conformity to the Divine image. Deep sorrows, and sore trials, and fiery temptations, we may have, and must have, if we ever enter the kingdom; but, what is sorrow, and what is trial, and what is temptation, if they work but in us the fruits of righteousness, fit us more perfectly for heaven, and waft us nearer to our eternal home? Press, in humble faith, this precious truth to your heart, for God has forgiven all, and has cancelled all, and has forgotten all, and is your God forever and ever.

"But in that coming day, no weapon turned against you will succeed. And

everyone who tells lies in court will be brought to justice. These benefits are enjoyed by the servants of the Lord; their vindication will come from me. I, the Lord, have spoken!" Isaiah 54:17

## **CHAPTER 33.**

### **"The Believers Triumph"**

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Romans 8:34

Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Romans 8:34

Who then will condemn us? Will Christ Jesus? No, for he is the one who died for us and was raised to life for us and is sitting at the place of highest honor next to God, pleading for us. Romans 8:34

We have remarked that the soul of the Apostle rose with the sublimity of his theme. It was impossible not to perceive, as we followed him in his masterly and conclusive argument, how his mighty mind kindled with fresh rapture, as each successive step conducted him towards its magnificent climax. It may truly be said to be the "mighty work of a mind acting in all the dignity of independent greatness, and fired and elevated by a principle no less commanding than the love of Jesus." He had thrown down the undaunted challenge, unaccepted, and now he breathes the final triumph—"Who is he that condemns?" Let us briefly follow him in the different parts of the mediatorial work of Christ, which he exhibits in the passage, as constituting the ground of the believer's triumph.

"It is Christ that died." Upon this fact we have somewhat descanted elsewhere, in explaining the doctrine of the believer's justification. The object of the writer in introducing it again, was to confirm the Christian's exemption from condemnation, on the broad basis of Christ's mediation. This event formed the first of all the subsequent steps in the working out of the great plan of the Church's redemption. To this, as its center, every line of truth converged. It was as a suffering Messiah, as an atoning High Priest, as a

crucified Savior, as a Conqueror, returning from the battle-field with garments rolled in blood, that the Son of God was revealed to the eye of the Old Testament saints. They were taught by every type, and by every prophecy, to look to "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Christ must die! Death had entered our world, and death—the death of the Prince of Life—only could expel it. This event formed the deepest valley of our Lord's humiliation. It was the dark background—the somber shading of the picture of his life, around which gathered the light and glory of all the subsequent parts of his history. But in what character did Christ die? Not as a Martyr, nor as a Model, but as a *Substitute*. His death was substitutionary. "God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died *for us*." This great truth, the Apostle, we find in another place, appropriating to himself. "The Son of God who loved me and gave himself *for me*." Here was the personal application of a general truth. And this is the privilege of faith. There breathes not a babe in Christ, who may not lay his hand upon this glorious truth—"Christ gave himself for me." Contemplate now, the conclusiveness of this reasoning for the non-condemnation of the believer. Since Christ bore our sins, and was condemned in our place; since by his expiatory death the claims of Divine justice are answered, and the holiness of the Divine law is maintained, who can condemn those for whom he died? Oh, what security is this for the believer in Jesus! Standing beneath the shadow of the cross, the weakest saint can confront his deadliest foe; and every accusation alleged, and every sentence of condemnation uttered, he can meet, by pointing to Him who died. In that one fact he sees the great debt cancelled, the entire curse removed, the grand indictment quashed—and "No condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus," are words written as in letters of living light upon the cross.

"Yes rather, that is risen again." This is the second part of the mediation of Christ, which the Apostle assigns as a reason why none can condemn the believer. It would seem by the word "rather" that we are taught to look upon this fact of *our Lord's life* as supplying a still stronger affirmation of the great truth he was establishing. A few observations may make this appear. The atoning work of Christ was in itself a finished work. It supplied all that the case demanded. Nothing could possibly add to its perfection. "I have finished the work which you gave me to do." But we lacked the proof. We required that evidence of the reality and acceptance of the Atonement which would render our faith in it a rational and intelligent act. The proof lay with him who was "pleased to bruise him and put him to grief." If God were satisfied, then the guilty, trembling sinner may confidently and safely repose on the

work of the Savior. The fact of the resurrection was therefore essential to give reality to the Atonement, and hope to man. Had he not returned in triumph from the grave, the sanctity of his precepts, the sublimity of his teachings, the luster of his example, and the sympathies awakened by the story of his death, might have attracted, charmed, and subdued us, but all expectation of redemption by his blood would have been a mockery and a delusion. But, "This Jesus has God raised up." And grounded on this fact the believer's acquittal is complete. When he bowed his head and gave up the spirit, the sentence of condemnation was reversed; but when he burst the bonds of death, and appeared in the character of a Victor, the believer's justification was forever sealed. "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." Here, then, lies the great security of the believer. "Delivered for our offences, he rose again for our justification." Planting his foot of faith upon the vacant tomb of his living Redeemer, the Christian can exclaim, "Who is he that condemns? it is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again." Oh, to feel the power of his resurrection in our souls! Oh, to rise with him in all the reality and glory of this his new-born life, our minds, our affections, our aspirations, our hopes all quickened, and ascending with our living Lord. "Because I live, you shall live also."

"Who is even at the right hand of God." The exaltation of Christ was a necessary part of his mediatorial work. It entered essentially into the further continuance of that work in heaven—the scene of *the intercessory part of the High Priest's office*. "The right hand of God" is a phrase expressive of power and dignity. "When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him." What stronger assurance has the believer that no impeachment against him can be successful, than this? His Savior, his Advocate, his best Friend, is at the right hand of the Father, advanced to the highest post of honor and power in heaven.

"There sits our Savior crowned with light,  
Clothed in a body like our own."

All power and dominion are his. The revolutions of the planets, and the destinies of empires, his hand guides. The government is upon his shoulders; and for the well being, security, and triumph of his Church, power over all flesh, and dominion over all worlds, is placed in his hands. Who, then, can

**condemn? Jesus is at the right hand of God, and the principalities and powers of all worlds are subject to his authority. Fear not, therefore, O, believer! Your Head and Redeemer is alive to frustrate every purpose, to resist every plot, and to silence every tongue that would condemn you.**

**"Who also makes intercession for us." To what a beautiful climax does the Apostle conduct his argument! The exaltation of Jesus in heaven is associated with the dearest interests of his people on earth. Joseph was forgotten when Pharaoh lifted up the head of the chief butler. But our Lord, amid the honors and splendors to which God has highly exalted him, still remembers his brethren in bonds, and makes intercession for them. How expressive is the type of our Lord's present engagement on behalf of his people! "And he (Aaron) shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil: and he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony." The passing of Aaron into the holy of holies, was the shadowing forth of our Lord's entrance into**

**heaven. The blood sprinkled at the mercy seat was the presentation of the great Atonement within the veil. And the incense overshadowing with its fragrant cloud the mercy seat, thus touched with blood, was the figure of the ceaseless intercession of our Great High Priest in the Holiest. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true: but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." It is an individual, an anticipative, and a present intercession. It embraces all the personal needs of each believer, it precedes each temptation and each trial, and at the moment that the sympathy and the prayers of the Savior are the most called for, and are felt to be the most soothing, it bears the saint and his sorrow on its bosom before the throne. Just at a crisis of his history, at a juncture, perhaps, the most critical in his life; and when the heart, oppressed with its emotions, cannot breathe a prayer, Jesus is remembering him, sympathizing with him, and interceding for him. Oh, who can fully describe the blessings that flow through the intercession of the Son of God? The love, the sympathy, the forethought, the carefulness, the minute interest in all our concerns, are blessings beyond description. Tried, tempted believer! Jesus makes intercession for you. Your case is not unknown to him. Your sorrow is not hidden from him. Your name is on his heart. Your burden is on his shoulder; and because he not only has prayed for you, but prays for you now, your faith shall not fail. Your great accuser may stand at your right hand to condemn you, but your great Advocate stands at the right hand of God to**

plead for you. And greater is he that is for you, than all that are against you.

**Behold the ground of the believer's triumph! What has he to fear? "Who is he that condemns?" The mediatorial work of Christ shuts every mouth, meets every accusation, and ignores every indictment that can be brought against those for whom he died, rose again, ascended up on high, and makes intercession. Oh, what a glorious triumph does Christ secure to the weakest saint who stands in faith upon this rock! "There is therefore now NO CONDEMNATION to those who are in Christ Jesus."**

## **CHAPTER 34.**

### **"More than Conquerors"**

**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, 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. Romans 8:35-37**

**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Romans 8:35-37**

**Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or are hungry or cold or in danger or threatened with death? (Even the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. Romans 8:35-37**

**The Apostle here enumerates certain things which, to the obscure eye of faith, and to the yet obscurer eye of sense, would appear to make against the best interests of the Christian, regarded either as evidences of a waning of Christ's love to him, or as calculated to produce such a result. He proposes an inquiry—the purport of which we reserve for the consideration of the closing chapter of this work—and then proceeds to give the reply. That reply sets the**

question entirely at rest. He argues that, so far from the things which he enumerates shaking the constancy of Christ's love, periling the safety of the Christian, or shading the luster of his renown, they but developed the Savior's affection to him more strongly, confirmed the fact of his security, and entwined fresh and more verdant laurels around his brow. "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

We are first invited to contemplate the Christian in the character of a 'Conqueror.' The battle we have, at some length, already considered. We have seen it to consist of a moral conflict, with inward and outward enemies, all leagued in terrible force against the soul. To this is added—what, indeed, was most peculiar to the early Church—a war of external suffering, in which penury, persecution, and, martyrdom constituted the dark and essential elements. Now it will be instructive to observe in what way Christ provides for the holy warrior's passage through this fiery contest. It will be perceived that it is not by flight, but by battle; not by retreat, but by advance; not by shunning, but by facing the foe. The Captain of their salvation might have withdrawn his people from the field, and conducted them to heaven without the hazard of a conflict. But not so. He will lead them to glory, but it shall be by the path of glory. They shall carve their way to the crown by the achievements of the sword. They shall have privation, and distress, and suffering, of every kind; yet while beneath the pressure, and in the very heat of the battle, victory shall crown their arms, and a glorious triumph shall deepen the splendor of their victory. And what spiritual eye does not clearly see, that in conducting his people across the battle-field, the Lord wins to himself more renown than though he had led them to their eternal rest with entire exemption from conflict and distress? But in what sense are we conquerors? Just in that sense in which the Holy Spirit obtains the victory. It is not the believer himself who conquers; it is the Divine Spirit within the believer. No movement is seen, no tactics are observed, no war-cry is heard, and yet there is passing within the soul a more important battle, and there is secured a more brilliant victory, than ever the pen of the historian recorded. In the first place, there is the conquest of faith. Where do the annals of war present such a succession of victories so brilliant, achieved by a weapon so single and simple, as is recorded in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews? And what was the grace that won those spiritual and glorious victories? It was the grace of faith! "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even your faith." Faith in the truth of God's word—faith in the veracity of God's character—faith in the might, and skill, and wisdom, of our Commander and Leader—faith eyeing the prize, gives the victory to the

Christian combatant, and secures the glory to the Captain of his salvation. And then there is the triumph of patience. "That you do not be slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." "And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise." Oh, is it no real victory of the Holy Spirit in the believer, when beneath the pressure of great affliction, passing through a discipline the most painful and humiliating, the suffering Christian is enabled to cry, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him?" "The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" "Not my will but yours be done." Suffering child of God, "let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing." And, then, there is the conquest of joy. "And you became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit." "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations," (or trials). Why is trial an occasion of joy? Because it is the triumph of the Holy Spirit in the soul. And does not Christ say, "You shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy?" And who but Jesus can turn our sorrow into joy? not only assuaging our griefs, alleviating our sufferings, and tempering the furnace-flame, but actually making our deepest, darkest sorrows, the occasion of the deepest gladness, praise, and thanksgiving. "You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing. You have taken away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy, that I might sing praises to you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever!" Oh, yes! it is a glorious victory of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, in the soul, when it can enable the believer to adopt the words of the suffering Apostle, "I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation." Suffering reader! Jesus knows how to turn your sorrow into joy. Confide your grief to him, and he will cause it sweetly to sing.

"More than conquerors." The original word will admit a stronger rendering than our translators have allowed it. The same word is in another place rendered, "a far more and exceeding and eternal weight of glory." So that in the present instance it might be translated, "far more exceeding conquerors." The phrase seems to imply that it is more than a mere victory which the believer gains. A battle may be won at a great loss to the conqueror. A great leader may fall at the head of his troops. The flower of an army may be destroyed, and the best blood of a nation's pride may be shed. But the Christian conquers with no such loss. Nothing whatever essential to his well-being is periled. His armor, riveted upon his soul by the Holy Spirit, he cannot lose. His life, hid with Christ in God, cannot be endangered. His Leader and Commander, once dead, is alive and dies no more. Nothing valuable and

precious shall he lose. There is not a grace in his soul but shall come out of the battle with sin, and Satan, and the world, purer and brighter for the conflict. *The more thoroughly the Lord brings our graces into exercise, the more fully shall they be developed, and the more mightily shall they be invigorated.* Not a grain of grace shall perish in the winnowing, not a particle of faith shall be consumed in the refining. Losing nothing, he gains everything! He returns from the battle laden with the spoils of a glorious victory—"more than a conqueror." All his resources are augmented by the result. His armor is brighter, his sword is keener, his courage is more dauntless, because of the conflict. Every grace of the Spirit is matured. Faith is strengthened—love is expanded—experience is deepened—knowledge is increased. He comes forth from the trial holier and more valorous than when he entered it. His weakness has taught him wherein his strength lies. His necessity has made him better acquainted with Christ's fullness. His peril has shown him who taught his hands to battle and his fingers to fight, and whose shield covered his head in the day of battle. He is "more than conqueror"—he is triumphant!

"Through him that loved us." Here is the great secret of our victory, the source of our triumph. Behold the mystery explained, how a weak, timid believer, often running from his own shadow, is yet "more than a conqueror" over his many and mighty foes. To Christ who loved him, who gave himself for him, who died in his stead, and lives to intercede on his behalf, the glory of the triumph is ascribed. And this is the song he chants, "Thanks be to God which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Through the conquest which he himself obtained, through the grace which he imparts, through the strength which he inspires, through the intercession which he presents, in all our "tribulation, and distress, and persecution, and famine, and nakedness, and peril, and sword" we are "more than conquerors." Accounted though we are as "sheep for the slaughter," yet our Great Shepherd, Himself slain for the sheep, guides his flock, and has declared that no one shall pluck them out of his hand. We are more than conquerors through his grace who loved us in the very circumstances that threaten to overwhelm. Fear not, then, the darkest cloud, nor the proudest waves, nor the deepest needs—in these very things you shall, through Christ, prove triumphant. Nor shrink from the battle with the "last enemy." Death received a death-wound when Christ died. You face a conquered foe. He stands at your side a crownless king, and waving a broken scepter. Your death shall be another victory over the believer's last foe. Planting your foot of faith upon his prostrate neck, you shall spring into glory, more than a conqueror, through him that loved you. Thus passing to glory in triumph, you shall go to swell the

ranks of the "noble army of martyrs"—those Christian heroes of whom it is recorded, "THEY OVERCAME HIM BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB."

## CHAPTER 35

### "No Separation from Christ Jesus"

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels can't, and the demons can't. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can't keep God's love away. Whether we are high above the sky or in the deepest ocean, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39

This sublime chapter having opened with a strong declaration of *no condemnation* in Christ Jesus, it was fit that it should close with a declaration equally strong, of *no separation* from Christ Jesus. In passing through its rich and precious contents, our feelings have resembled those of a tourist coursing his way over an extended and magnificent landscape of varied feature and of exquisite loveliness. We have surveyed the scenery of the Christian life, from almost every point of observation, and in all its variety of form, beauty of coloring, and harmony of design. And now, having reached the loftiest summit of Christian hope, with a rapid survey of the radiant and far-reaching prospect stretching out before the eye, we will conduct our reflections to a close. It is a delightful and animating theme with which the chapter terminates. The last object it presents to the eye is JESUS. The last accents that linger on the ear are of the love of JESUS. Jesus was the beginning, and Jesus is the ending—and Jesus, in his personal glory, in his mediatorial work, in his inexhaustible fullness, in the close and tender relations which he sustains to his people, forms the sum and substance of all that intervenes

between these two extremes—no condemnation, and no separation. The central figure is Christ. He is *the Magnet* which attracts all the affections awakened by these great and glowing truths; and he is the object around which the truths themselves closely, exclusively, and indissolubly entwine. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end—yes, Christ is all and in all. Be he all in all to our hearts!

It is of great importance that we have a clear apprehension of the Apostle's leading idea in these concluding verses. He refers to a love from which there is no separation. Of whose love does he speak? The believer's love to Christ? On the contrary—it is Christ's love to the believer. And this view of the subject makes all the difference in its influence upon our minds. What true satisfaction and real consolation, at least how small its measure, can the believer derive from a contemplation of *his* love to Christ? It is true, when sensible of its glow, and conscious of its power, he cannot but rejoice in any evidence, the smallest, of the work of the Holy Spirit in his soul. Yet this is not the legitimate ground of his confidence, nor the proper source of his comfort. *It is Christ's love to him!* And this is just the truth the Christian mind needs for its repose. To whom did Paul originally address this letter? To the saints of the early and suffering age of the Christian Church. And this truth—Christ's love to his people—would be just the truth calculated to comfort, and strengthen, and animate them. To have declared that nothing should prevail to induce them to forsake Christ, would have been but poor consolation to individuals who had witnessed many a fearful apostasy from Christ in others, and who had often detected the working of the same principle in themselves. Calling to mind the strong asseveration of Peter, "Lord, though all should forsake you yet will I not," and remembering how their Master was denied by one, and betrayed by another, and forsaken by all his disciples, their hearts would fail them. But let the Apostle allure their minds from a contemplation of their love to Christ, to a contemplation of Christ's love to them, assuring them, upon the strongest grounds, that whatever sufferings they should endure, or by whatever temptations they should be assailed, nothing should prevail to sever them from their interest in the reality, sympathy, and constancy of that love, and he has at once brought them to the most perfect repose. The affection, then, of which the Apostle speaks, is the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

The love of Christ! such is our precious theme! Of it can we ever weary? Its greatness can we ever know? Its plenitude can we fully contain? Never! Its depths cannot be fathomed, its dimensions cannot be measured. It passes knowledge. All that Jesus did for his Church was but the unfolding and

expression of his love. Traveling to Bethlehem—I see love incarnate. Tracking his steps as he went about doing good—I see love laboring. Visiting the house of Bethany—I see love sympathizing. Standing by the grave of Lazarus—I see love weeping. Entering the gloomy precincts of Gethsemane—I see love sorrowing. Passing on to Calvary—I see love suffering, and bleeding, and expiring. The whole scene of his life is but an unfolding of the deep, and awesome, and precious mystery of redeeming love.

The love of the Father! Such, too, is our theme; and it is proper that with this truth the chapter should close. "The love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The love of the Father is seen in giving us Christ, in choosing us in Christ, and in blessing us in him with all spiritual blessings. Indeed, the love of the Father is the fountain of all covenant and redemption mercy to the church. It is that river the streams whereof make glad the city of God. How anxious was Jesus to vindicate the love of the Father from all the suspicions and fears of his disciples! "I say not unto you, that I will ask the Father for you, for the Father Himself loves you." "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son." To this love we must trace all the blessings which flow to us through the channel of the cross. It is the love of God, exhibited, manifested, and seen in Christ Jesus. Christ being, not the originator, but the gift of his love; not the cause, but the exponent of it. Oh, to see a perfect equality in the Father's love with the Son's love! Then shall we be led to trace all his sweet mercies, and all his providential dealings, however trying, painful, and mysterious, to the heart of God; thus resolving all into that from where all alike flow—everlasting and unchangeable LOVE.

Now it is from this love there is no separation. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" The Apostle had challenged accusation from every foe, and condemnation from every quarter; but no accuser rose, and no condemnation was pronounced. Standing on the broad basis of Christ's finished work, and of God's full justification, his head was now lifted up in triumph above all his enemies round about. But it is possible that though in the believer's heart there is no fear of impeachment, there yet may exist the latent one of separation. The aggregate dealings of God with his church, and his individual dealings with his saints, may at times present the appearance of an alienated affection, or a lessened sympathy. The age in which this epistle was penned, was fruitful of suffering to the church of God. And if any period or any circumstances of her history boded a severance of the bond which bound her to Christ, that was the period, and those were the circumstances. But with a confidence based upon the glorious truth on which he had been

descanting—the security of the Church of God in Christ—and with a persuasion inspired by the closer realization of the glory about to burst upon her view—with the most dauntless courage he exclaims—"I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Let us briefly glance at each of these *things which may threaten, but which cannot succeed in separating* us from the love of God, and from our union with Christ.

The passage commences with "death." That there is a separating power in death, is a truth too evident and too affecting to deny. It separates the soul from the body, and man from all the pursuits and attractions of earth. "His breath goes forth, in that very day his thoughts perish." All his thoughts of ambition—his thoughts of advancement—his thoughts of a vain and Pharisaical religion—all perish in that day. What a mournful sublimity is there in this vivid description of the separating power of death over the creature! What a separating power, too, has it, as felt in the chasms it creates in human relationships! Who has not lost a friend, a second self, by the ruthless hand of death? What bright home has not been darkened, what loving heart has not been saddened, by its visitations? It separates us from the husband of our youth—from the wife of our bosom—from the child of our affections—from the friend and companion of our earlier and riper years. It comes and breaks the link that bound us so fondly and so closely to the being, whose affection, sympathy, and communion seemed essential elements of our being, whose life we were wont to regard as a part of our very existence. But there is one thing from which death cannot separate us—the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, and all the blessings which that love bestows. Death separate us! No; death unites us the more closely to those blessings, by bringing us into their more full and permanent possession. Death imparts a realization and a permanence to all the splendid and holy anticipation of the Christian. The happiest moment of his life is its last. All the glory and blessing of his existence cluster and brighten around that solemn crisis of his being. Then it is he feels how precious the privilege, and how great the distinction of being a believer in Jesus. And the day that darkens his eye to all earthly scenes, opens it upon the untold, and unimaginable, and ever—increasing glories of eternity. It is the birth day of his immortality. Then, Christian, fear not death! It cannot separate you from the Father's love, nor can it, while it tears you from an earthly bosom, wrench you from Christ's. You shall have in death, it may be, a brighter, sweeter manifestation of his love than you ever

experienced in life. Jesus, the Conqueror of death, will approach and place beneath you his almighty arms, and your head upon his loving bosom. Thus encircled and pillowed, you "shall not see death," but passing through its gloomy portal shall only realize that you had actually died, from the consciousness of the joy and glory into which death had ushered you.

"Nor life." The hope of life is meant. The Apostle wrote, as we have remarked, in a peculiarly suffering era of the church—an age of fiery persecution for the Gospel's sake. Under these circumstances, life was not infrequently offered on condition of renouncing the Gospel, and denying the Savior. This was a strong temptation to apostasy. When in full view of the rack, the cross, the stake, life—precious life, with all its sweet attraction and fond ties—was offered, and which a simple renunciation of the cross, and a single embrace of the crucifix, would purchase back; to some, weak in faith, such a temptation might be well near irresistible. But it shall not succeed in separating the suffering Christian from the love of Christ. Nor shall anything connected with life—its trials, its vicissitudes, or its temptations—dissever us from God's affection. Thus both life and death shall but confirm us in the assurance of our inalienable interest in the love of God: "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." "Nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers." Of course, not good angels, but evil spirits, are here meant. And these include, not demons merely, but all evil agencies—men of the world—human governments—civil powers—all that is hostile to the spiritual interests of Christ's truth and kingdom. Such are often found either powerful engines of spiritual persecutions themselves, or else by indifference and connivance, sympathizing with, and abetting the high-handed persecutor. *But no human or superhuman power shall prevail to impair the interest of God's saints in his love.* Have they in a single instance done so? Has God ever forsaken his people, when the Evil Spirit has stirred up ungodly men and despotic governments to rob them of their rights, to fetter their consciences, to imprison or to slay their people? No, never! Secure in his love, no floods of enmity, no sword of persecution, shall ever displace the church of Christ. The day of her triumph over all her enemies is fast speeding on. A splendid day will that be. Her home had often been the fastness of the rock—the solitude of the mountain—the depth of the cave—the midnight gloom of the dungeon. She had often prophesied in sackcloth and in blood; at one time avowing her faith from the rack, and at another confessing the name of Jesus from amid the flames. But the day of her triumph and glory draws near. Then shall her enemies come bending unto her, and shall lick the dust of her feet. Who shall lay anything

then to her charge? Silenced, and condemned, all her foes shall retire to this terrible doom, leaving her enshrined in all the glory of the *Church Triumphant*.

"Things present." Things temporary and transient, be they sad or joyous, pleasant or painful. Indwelling sin, temporary trial, occasional temptations, the momentary suspensions of God's realized love—none of these, or any other things present, shall separate them from Christ.

"Things to come." What human foresight can predict the future of the earthly history of the child of God? What human hand can uplift the veil that conceals the events that shall yet transpire in his history before he reaches that perfect world where there will be no future, but one eternal present? Oh, what goodness hides it from our view! But be that future what it may, shady or sunny, stormy or serene, God will stand fast to his covenant with his Church, and Christ to his union with his people. Things to come, be they more terrible than things that are past, or that are now, shall not touch their interest in the Lord's love.

"Nor height." No elevation to which he may advance them, no height of rank, or wealth, or honor, or influence, or usefulness, shall peril their place in his love. Thus it was the Lord advanced Moses, and David, and Joseph, and Gideon; but in their elevation to worldly distinction, power, and affluence, they were kept walking humbly with God—and this was the secret of their safety. "The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hind's feet, and he will make me to walk upon high places.

"Nor depth." Oh, how deep those depths may be! From the loftiest height to the lowest depth of adversity, God can bring his servant, yet love him still with an unchanged and deathless affection. But no depth of soul-distress, no depth of poverty, or suffering, or humiliation, shall disturb the repose or peril the security of a believing soul in the love of God.

"Nor any other creature." If there be any other thing or being in the wide universe that wears a threatening or unkindly aspect towards the Christian, Divine power shall restrain its force, saying to the proud waves, "Thus far shall you come, and no farther." And thus all the billows, amid which the Ark has for ages been tossed, shall but bear it gently and triumphantly onward to the Mount of God. On that mount, beloved, where now are gathering all who have the Father's name written on their foreheads, we, too, through grace,

**shall stand eternally extolling the LAMB, through Him, who—because he died—there is for us NO CONDEMNATION from Divine justice—and through Him, who—because he lives, there is for US NO SEPARATION from Divine love.**

**"Oh, when my God, my glory, brings  
His white and holy train  
Unto those clear and living springs  
Where comes no stain  
"Where all is light, and flowers, and fruit,  
And joy, and rest,  
Make me among them, it is my suit!  
The last one and the least."**