

The Works of Robert Hawker

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THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

In this book of GOD, we enter upon a very interesting part of the divine records, in what relates to the Church of CHRIST, from, and after our LORD'S ascension. The history of the Church from this period becomes highly important, in that it presents us with the account of the first open manifestation of GOD the HOLY GHOST, in his Almighty Ministry, agreeably to the promise of CHRIST, before his departure; and thereby becomes a confirmation of the whole. Here it is proved, that GOD the HOLY GHOST is the Founder, and Builder, of the Church, from the beginning. He had framed, and ordained the whole, in all the departments of it. But now, redemption-work being finished, by the Almighty Author of salvation, the LORD the SPIRIT is here mercifully pleased to reveal himself more openly, in the Almighty Ministry, which belonged to Him in his Covenant-office character.

The Acts of the Apostles, so called, because it contains the records of those holy servants of the LORD, takes up the subject from whence the Gospels had left off, at the ascension of the LORD JESUS; and carries on the blessed

history of the Church, through a period of about *thirty years*, until the imprisonment of the Apostle *Paul*.

In respect to the Writer of it, there can be no question. *Luke* is allowed by every one to have been the inspired Pen-man of it. The preface with which he begins it, and his directing it to the same person, to whom he sent the Gospel which bears his name; are evident proofs, And the Church hath abundant reason to bless GOD the HOLY GHOST, who is the Author and Giver of all Scripture, for the ministry of this man, on both those occasions.

I do not think it necessary to add any thing more by way of preface. I only very earnestly request the Reader, to enter upon the perusal of this sacred book of GOD, with prayer; because this will furnish a well-grounded hope, that the close of it will be in praise. Blessed Author of the whole Scripture of inspiration! (I would say both for myself and Reader,) vouchsafe thy gracious teachings! Open to us both, if it be thine holy will, the precious pages here contained. And, LORD! do thou open our hearts to the right apprehension of all the great truths of GOD, contained in them. Oh! for an ear to hear, *what the SPIRIT saith unto the Churches!* Amen.

CHAPTER 1

CONTENTS

This blessed Record of Divine Truth, opens with the History of CHRIST'S Ascension. Peter's Address to the Apostles. The

Election of Matthias to be of the twelve, in the Room of the Traitor Judas.

ACTS 1:1-2

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, (2) Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

The principal point which arrests my attention, in the opening of this Chapter, is, what the sacred writer hath here said, of the LORD JESUS having given his commandments to his Apostles, *through the* HOLY GHOST. The Reader will recollect, that the history of the Church, at the Ascension of CHRIST, opens in a more immediate manner, with the ministry of GOD the HOLY GHOST. The commandments of the LORD JESUS therefore were, to direct their minds to the expectation of the LORD the SPIRIT, in his coming. Some more visible, more open display of His Almighty presence and power, they were taught to look for. And not a foot were they to go out of *Jerusalem*, until this had been accomplished, Luke 24:49. I would pray the Reader, therefore, to open this Chapter with the expectation of these momentous things. I would entreat him to be on the look out, at every step he takes. The subject connected with the ministry of GOD the HOLY GHOST, in his Person, GODHEAD, and Covenant offices, can never be too thoroughly understood, neither too closely regarded May the LORD the SPIRIT be our Teacher!

ACTS 1:3-5

To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: (4) And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should

not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. (5) For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

It is well worthy our highest attention, that though we are told, the LORD JESUS remained forty days on earth, after his resurrection, yet he did not mingle with his disciples as before, in their daily intercourse, He was seen of them for forty days together: that is, from the first to the last. The morning of his resurrection was the first. And this, which was by appointment, was the last, being the *fortieth day* from his resurrection included. But though he manifested himself to them at times, both when they looked for him, and when they did not; yet the word of GOD gives no authority to conclude, that he was always with them: but rather on the contrary. He gave infallible proofs of his being alive; and of his being the same identical person as before his death; by eating and drinking with them, after he arose from the dead, Luke 24:39-43. And beside the relation, which is given by the Evangelists, of the many separate and distinct appearances, which the LORD made of himself, upon various occasions, after his resurrection, *Paul* mentions, of five hundred brethren at one time, who saw him. 1 Corinthians 15:6. So that, as this scripture asserts, he *shewed himself to them alive, after his passion by many infallible proofs*: and not the shadow of a doubt could remain, of the reality of the fact itself. Yet still it is worthy our observation, that Jesus did not mingle with them as heretofore. The same unbounded love, the LORD shewed them; and every act testified, that there was no change in his nature, nor in his regard to them: but there was a difference in his state. And might not this be intended, (I

simply ask the question, and not decide,) to intimate to them, that when his people are quickened, from the death of sin, an holy solemnity should follow, suited to a risen state!

What more immediate subjects those were, which the LORD discoursed upon, between the interval of his resurrection and ascension, is not said, further, than that *they pertained to the kingdom of GOD*. But as the coming of GOD the HOLY GHOST was at hand, and his office would be, to lead them into all truth, it is reasonable to conclude, that JESUS connected what he had told them before, concerning the Person, work, and grace of the HOLY GHOST, with speaking of him now. And, as the whole efficient part of the Covenant, was to be, in a more eminent manner, distinguished by his ministry, no doubt, this formed a principal subject, in the LORD's discourses.

I beg the Reader, before he goes further, to observe the vast line of distinction, which the LORD JESUS draws, between the water baptism of *John*, and the spiritual baptism of GOD the HOLY GHOST. Without entering into all the particulars included in this out-pouring of the SPIRIT, expressed under the term baptism: (indeed who is competent to describe, either the nature, or extent of the LORD the SPIRIT's operations:) we may justly conclude, that it was intended more or less, to imply, all the special offices of the HOLY GHOST. And perhaps, in a yet more personal manner, the ordination of the Apostles to their ministry. But yet, not to the exclusion of the whole Church, in all other matters, of which the Apostles were the representatives.

The HOLY GHOST is the Founder and Architect of the Church, His it is, to arrange and order, to preside over, and govern,

the whole building. And as He has founded the Church *on* CHRIST, so is it his to raise up the several departments *from* CHRIST, and form all the stones of the temple as living stones *in* CHRIST; for *an habitation of GOD through the SPIRIT*, 1 Peter 2:5; Ephesians 2:22. Indeed from the beginning of the revelation of GOD, this had been his special work, according to the antient settlements of the Covenant. The HOLY GHOST from everlasting, was the Almighty minister, in the Church, And every ordinance and means of grace, were as much his appointment under the Old Testament, as under the New. This we learn from a single verse, most plainly and decidedly, (if there were no other,) in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*. For when *Paul* had related the particulars of furniture in the Jewish tabernacle, and the uses of the whole; he refers the appointment and design, unto the sovereign will and pleasure of GOD the SPIRIT: *the HOLY GHOST this signifying*, said *Paul*. Hereby ascribing to Him personal being and agency, sovereignty and almighty power; and declaring his own eternal GODHEAD by expressly saying, that the priests, when daily performing those acts of worship, were *accomplishing the service of* GOD. I pray the Reader to read the whole passage, Hebrews 9:1-8.

We shall have, in some measure, a right apprehension of faith, in relation to the Person, GODHEAD, and Office-characters, of GOD the HOLY GHOST, in these Covenant transactions, by having these things in view; if so be, the LORD himself, (of whom we presume to speak,) condescends to enlighten our understanding. As GOD the HOLY GHOST *founded* the Church, so it was his office, and he did it, *anoint*, both the *Head* of the Church, and all the members of

his mystical body, John 3:34; Ephesians 4:7; Psalm 45:7. His office it hath been from the beginning, to *give* to the Church all her Prophets. *For the Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of GOD spake as they were moved by the HOLY GHOST*, 2 Peter 1:21. His it was, to *ordain* all the ministers, as well under the Old Testament as the New. The Prophet *Isaiah* saw CHRIST'S glory, when he heard the voice saying, *whom shall I send, and who will go for us*. And that this was GOD the HOLY GHOST which spake, is evident, by what followed, and *Paul's* explanation, indirect reference to Him. *And He said: Go, and tell this people, &c. Well spake the HOLY GHOST* (said Paul, when he quoted the passage from the Prophet's writings,) *by Esaias the Prophet unto our fathers, saying: go unto this people, &c.* Compare Isaiah 6:8-10 with John 12:39-41 and Acts 28:25-27. And as the ordination to the ministry was the office of GOD the HOLY GHOST, before the coming of CHRIST, under the Old Testament; so we find him ordaining his ministers, and to his service, under the New. *As they ministered to the LORD and fasted, the HOLY GHOST said; Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work thereunto I have called them*, Acts 13:2. See the Commentary there. In short, it is the LORD the SPIRIT'S work, to *send out* and to *restrain*, Acts 13:4 with Acts 16:6, to *teach in* the word, and *by* the word, 1 Corinthians 2:18 with 2 Thessalonians 1:5, to *accompany* the word from heaven: 1 Peter 1:11-12, and to *light upon the hearts of the people*, while the word is preaching upon earth, Acts 10:44. And in every instance of success *Paul* saith it ariseth not from *the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the SPIRIT, and of power*, 1 Corinthians 2:4.

ACTS 1:6-8

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? (7) And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. (8) But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

This meeting, which was by the LORD'S appointment, (see Matthew 28:16) and which it should seem, was not the same as that spoken of verse 5 (Acts 1:5); was the last farewell between JESUS and his Apostles, before his ascension. Everything in it, became interesting. The question which the Apostles put to CHRIST, plainly shews that their minds, notwithstanding our LORD'S death, and resurrection, were still warped, with the same Jewish ideas, of an earthly kingdom. And I beg the Reader to notice this, the rather because it serves to confirm the blessed truth, that it is the office work of GOD the HOLY GHOST, *to guide into all truth*, John 16:13. Hence the LORD JESUS waved the question, by directing their minds to the expectation of the SPIRIT'S coming, which he had just before said, would be not many days hence. And what a blessed promise the LORD JESUS closed up the whole conversation with, when he finished his parting discourse; in the assurance, of what should be the immediate result of the HOLY GHOST'S coming: *Ye shall be witnesses unto me!* Reader! though this gracious promise of CHRIST had a special respect to the LORD'S Apostles, the ministers of his word, when GOD the SPIRIT had ordained them to the work: yet do not overlook the part, which all his people take in the same thing, when they have received also the gifts of the HOLY GHOST. Every

regenerated child of GOD, is a witness for GOD; not only to his Being as GOD, but to his being a GOD in CHRIST: and to all his Covenant offices, as they relate to the Church of GOD, in all ages. You and I are CHRIST'S witnesses, if so be the LORD the SPIRIT hath regenerated us from the Adam-nature of a fallen state, and brought us from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan, to the living GOD. We then can, and do, witness to the whole mission of CHRIST: and have the witness in ourselves, that CHRIST hath finished redemption-work, and is returned to glory; because, GOD the HOLY GHOST is come down, and we know it agreeably to our LORD'S most sure promise, before his ascension, Titus 3:3-7; John 16:7.

ACTS 1:9-11

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. (10) And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; (11) Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Reader! conceive with what astonishment the disciples beheld the ascension of CHRIST! What must have been their feelings! What their holy joy! How gracious was it in the LORD, not only to them, but for the sake of the whole Church, to send those two angels in human form, to explain to the wondering Apostles what they saw? Their minds no doubt, were absorbed in contemplating the glorious sight, which so beautifully corresponded to the predictions of prophecy concerning it (see Psalm 24, Psalm 47; Psalm 69), and probably some of them might recollect, what JESUS had said to *Nathanael*: John 1:51, and to the murmuring Jews: John 6:62.

But be this as it might, the angels called off their attention, from attending to the mere splendour of the sight, to the blissful consequences of their LORD'S ascension. And oh! how sweet the scripture which follows: *This same JESUS which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come, in like manner, as ye have seen him go into Heaven.* Reader! ponder well these words. Your GOD, your SAVIOR, in the same identity of Person; divine, and human, as he left the earth: so now remains, and so again will return, when his feet shall stand again on the very same mount from whence he went up. See Zechariah 14:4; Acts 3:21; 2 Thessalonians 1:10. And in the mean time, for the full scope of faith, in every need and want, we should never, *no*, not for a moment, forget, that the SON of GOD in our nature, is now in heaven, and there exercising his office, *of an unchangeable priesthood*, Hebrews 7:24. So that his mercies towards his people, are the mercies of both natures; and are manifested in this double way, and through such a medium as could not have been shewn had he been GOD only. His mercies are indeed infinite, because he is GOD: and his human nature in communicating them to us, renders them endless and unceasing from that Almighty power. But at the same time, they are all in One of our own nature, and they flow to us in, and through this nature, with a sweetness to endear them to our hearts. And hence the Apostle's direction to go to him, Hebrews 4:14-16. Reader! do you not believe this glorious article of our most holy faith? Do you not know, that our *Emmanuel*, GOD with us, GOD in our nature, is now in heaven? And do you not, if so, bring that belief into daily, hourly use? Are you not often at the heavenly court? And are you not, like the Apostles, looking for, and hastening

unto the coming of the great day of his return? 2 Peter 3:12-14; Philipians 3:20-21.

ACTS 1:12-14

Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. (13) And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. (14) These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

It is better to be conceived than expressed, what were the feelings of the Apostles, when hastening back to *Jerusalem*, from the mount after they had lost sight of JESUS, and the angels had called off their attention to the consideration of what was to follow. But I pray the Reader, not to overlook what is said, of their continuing in prayer. No doubt, the LORD inclined their hearts, to be in this waiting, praying frame, for the mercy they were now so earnestly expecting of the baptism of the HOLY GHOST. It is always a sure sign, of some coming blessing, whensoever the LORD sets his people a praying for it. Prayer brings the promise, and the GOD of the promise together. And when any of the praying seed of *Jacob* can follow up *Jacob's* importunity, of wrestling with GOD, with an earnestness like him; very sure it is, that all the family soon find, as those Apostles did, a promising GOD is a performing GOD.

ACTS 1:15-22

And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about a hundred and twenty,) (16) Men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake

before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. (17) For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. (18) Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. (19) And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, *Aceldama*, that is to say, The field of blood. (20) For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishopric let another take. (21) Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, (22) Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

The day here spoken of means one of the ten days in the interval from the LORD's ascension, to the descent of the HOLY GHOST. I beg the Reader to notice, what *Peter* saith of the HOLY GHOST's speaking by *David*. A plain proof, in confirmation of what hath been before remarked in this Chapter, both of the Person, and GODHEAD, and Ministry, of the Almighty SPIRIT, in the Old Testament dispensation. GOD the HOLY GHOST was now going to make a more sensible, and open manifestation of himself, as GOD the FATHER, and GOD the SON, had done, in their office characters, as the next Chapter shews; but He had, it is plain, as the Founder of the Church, all along been presiding over the Church, and directing all the affairs of it, 2 Peter 1:21. And I beg the Reader also to remark with me, what *Peter* saith of the *needs be* there was, for the fulfilling of that scripture concerning *Judas*. Yes! The decrees and appointments of JEHOVAH are sure and certain. But the infamy of the traitor is not lessened by the sovereign ordinations of the LORD. In all foul transactions, the sin is the same; though the LORD overrules it to the divine glory, Acts 2:23-24; Jude 4. And I pray the Reader also to notice, what *Peter* saith of

Judas having been chosen into the number of the twelve Apostles, and having obtained part of the ministry. In addition to what hath been already observed, respecting the appointment of *Judas* to the Apostleship, and the obtaining part of the ministry, I would just say further, that it is in my view the mercy of the Church, to have these things always in remembrance. The part of the ministry *Judas* obtained, and the *being numbered* with the Apostles, had not a single act of grace in the whole. He had no *part* in CHRIST, we are very sure, Neither was he ever *numbered* in the book of life. And he therefore stands forth, an everlasting monument in the Church of the LORD JESUS; never to judge of men by outward things, nor outward privileges. The only well grounded cause for joy, is when our names are found to be *written in the book of life*, Luke 10:19-20.

I hope the Reader will also pay suitable attention, to what *Peter* hath said, of the prophetic Psalm, concerning *Judas*; and which, on his account, is strikingly called the *Iscaiotic* Psalm. What, but a spirit of prophecy could have spoken so pointedly to the person, and crimes of the traitor? The desolate habitation, or palace, is also mentioned in the 69th Psalm, 25th verse (Psalm 69:25). It is remarkable, that there should be exactly *thirty* specific curses in the 109th Psalm (Psalm 109), as if corresponding to the *thirty* pieces of silver, for which the traitor sold his master. But what is most to be attended to, in the Psalm, and the Apostle's application of it is, that *Peter* drew his conclusion from it, that it was the will of the HOLY GHOST, another should take his office. His days in the office were indeed few, and soon it became another's, Psalm 109:8.

In relation to what is said *of Judas* purchasing a field with the reward of iniquity, and falling headlong until his bowels gushed out: these things are not contrary to what is said of his hanging himself, Matthew 27:3-5. For it was his ill-gotten money, with which the field was afterwards bought. And it is possible, that he might have fallen from the place to which he had hung himself, after he was dead, and perhaps hung long there, and such a consequence might have followed. But what an awful end! And what an awful character!

ACTS 1:23-26

And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. (24) And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, (25) That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. (26) And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

The casting lots with an eye to the LORD, was agreeable to Scripture, Proverbs 16:33. And the Scape Goat was chosen in the same manner, Leviticus 16:8. But let not the Reader overlook what is said, of his going *to his own place*. For whether this refers to *Matthias* or to *Judas*, the doctrine is the same. Every man hath *his own place*. Hence, the Psalmist, describing the assembly of the wicked in hell, and the succession of characters for that place, saith: *he shall follow the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light*, Psalm 59:19. And where is that? *Like sheep*, (saith he,) *they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them*. The old translation hath it: *they lie in the hell like sheep*. For the double death, is first in the grave, and secondly in hell. And hence *David* takes comfort, that GOD *had redeemed his soul from the power of*

hell: for saith he, he shall receive me. Hence every man, both in life, and death, goeth to his own place. Reader! ponder well the striking subject! Oh! the vast difference, between the precious, and the vile: between him that serveth GOD, and him that serveth him not.

REFLECTIONS

PAUSE, Reader! on the very entrance at this sacred book of GOD, and mark well the blessed evidences here afforded of that most precious article of our faith, and hope; in the LORD's return to glory. JESUS! we hail thee, as our risen, and ascended SAVIOR! Thou art indeed *gone up on high: thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men: yea, LORD, in the manhood of thy nature, thou hast all grace for men, even for thy rebellious children, that the LORD GOD might dwell among them.* Send down, O LORD, the choice effusions of thy HOLY SPIRIT; and remember LORD thy promise, in which thou didst say: *I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you.* Even so. Amen.

Reader! let it be our daily exercise of faith, to make this article of our LORD's ascension, the constant subject of holy joy. There, would I say, as often as I consider the ascension of JESUS, there dwells the LORD CHRIST, in my nature, having accomplished redemption by his blood. The heavens must receive my GOD and SAVIOR, until the times of the restitution of all things. And he is gone before, to take possession of the kingdom in his Church's name, that *where he is there they may be also.* Moreover, by my LORD'S ascension, the justification of his whole redeemed is confirmed. *Here, he offered his soul an offering for sin: and there, he presented it*

perfect before JEHOVAH. His sacrifice he made upon earth, as our Great High Priest: and in heaven, he still ministers, going in before the presence of GOD with his own blood. And by virtue of the everlasting efficacy of that blood, all heaven is perfumed; and the redeemed are sanctified. Hail! thou glorious, and ascended SAVIOR! Send down LORD all thine ascension-gifts upon thy people!

CHAPTER 2

CONTENTS

GOD the HOLY GHOST visits the Apostles in a wonderful and miraculous Manner. The Apostles, being filled with the SPIRIT, speak divers Languages, The Astonishment of the Multitude. Peter's Sermon; and the Conversion of three thousand Souls.

ACTS 2:1

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

The day of Pentecost was fifty days from the Passover. It was the *second* of those three great festivals in the Jewish Church, when all the males of Israel were enjoined to appear before the LORD, Deuteronomy 16:16. This was the feast, which was to be observed before the people began their harvest; it being unlawful to enter upon their harvest, until this feast to the LORD had been observed. See Leviticus 23:10-11. This was the sacred day, which GOD the HOLY GHOST was pleased to appoint, for the more open manifestation of himself to the Church. And, as GOD the SON, in our nature, made the voluntary offer of himself in sacrifice, at the Jewish Passover;

the *first* great feast among his people, being our Passover, and the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world: 1 Corinthians 5:7; Revelation 13:8. So GOD the HOLY GHOST, consecrated this *second* feast to the gracious purpose, of assuming, in a more open manner, his Almighty ministry in his Church, by coming down in state, in a visible manifestation, on his Apostles: and from that hour to the present, and through all ages of the Church, to the consummation of all things, the LORD the SPIRIT, carries on all the efficiency of grace, in the hearts of the people, until grace is finished in glory. In this ever memorable and blessed day, the Apostles, (and it is probable the *seventy*, spoken of, Luke 10:1, or perhaps the whole hundred and twenty, spoken of in Acts 1:15, formed the compleat assembly,) were all with one accord met together, waiting in expectation, the sure promise of JESUS, Chapter one and verse five (Acts 1:5) Reader! pause, and contemplate, the sacred hour; and the holy solemnity of such a congregation! Oh! that the LORD would cause the review of such a season, and such an assembly, to operate upon the minds of the LORD'S people now, that wherever two or three are met together, in the LORD'S name, they might wait, in the humble frame, of sure expectation, of the LORD'S presence, Matthew 28:20; Isaiah 41:1.

ACTS 2:2-3

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

(3) And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

As this open display of GOD the HOLY GHOST in the Church, after the ascension of JESUS, is among the most momentous doctrines of our holy faith, and the proper apprehension of it,

is, of all others, the most interesting, I persuade myself that the Reader will grant me a more than usual indulgence, to dwell upon it particularly. And I am free to confess, that, according to my view of things, it is to our ignorance and inattention on this blessed part of the Gospel, is to be ascribed the lamentable state of Churches, (and even some Churches professing all the truths of our holy faith,) so confessedly destitute, as for the most part they are, of vital godliness. For surely, if GOD the HOLY GHOST, in his Almighty ministry, be not known nor enjoyed, if his Person and GODHEAD, if his covenant-office work and character, his influences and graces, be kept in the back ground of the ordinances, be those ordinances ever so sweet in themselves, or ever so frequently observed by the people, there must be great leanness of soul amidst the whole of them. It matters not what the minister saith, if we hear not what *the SPIRIT saith to the Churches*, Revelation 2:11; Revelation 2:17; Revelation 2:29, &c.

The first thing I beg the Reader to observe with me in what is said in those verses, is, the manner which GOD the HOLY GHOST was pleased to make use of, to manifest his Almighty presence. It was with sovereign strength, and by effects making known both his person, and eternal power, and GODHEAD. And, surely, if any thing could be supposed to identify both person and power, this display of Himself, by a sound from heaven, a rushing mighty wind, and filling the whole space occupied by the disciples, these were full demonstrations of both.

And here I stop the Reader, to remark the glory by which God the HOLY GHOST was pleased to manifest himself to the

Church, for the first time after CHRIST'S ascension. He had presided over the Church from the first moment he formed the Church, and numberless instances are on record of his Almighty agency, both on the Person of CHRIST, the great Head of his Church, and the Church, CHRIST'S members, all along the way the Church was brought through the whole of the Old Testament dispensation. Hence CHRIST was called by that name before his incarnation, and the LORD JESUS, by the spirit of prophecy, so described himself ages before he was born, Isaiah 61:1, &c. And as the LORD the SPIRIT anointed the head, so did he shed abroad his influences in the hearts of his members. See Numbers 11:16-17; Nehemiah 9:20; Ezekiel 2:2, &c. But now the LORD the SPIRIT will make an open manifestation of himself, and enter with state and dignity upon his blessed office, as LORD of CHRIST'S Church, now JESUS, having finished redemption-work, is returned to glory. So that the whole efficiency of salvation, in the heart of every individual member of CHRIST'S mystical body, becomes his province, according to covenant-engagements. Reader! I pray you to ponder well the subject, for it is well worthy the most animated consideration, of the LORD'S people. Let you and I both look up for the testimonies in our own hearts of His divine teaching, for every view of His Almighty agency in the Church of whom I am now speaking is blessed.

When the Reader hath duly considered these things, I would beg of him next to observe what a beautiful order and harmony there is shewn in the joint acts of the HOLY THREE in ONE, as relating to the Church, now fulfilled by this manifestation of GOD the SPIRIT at the day of Pentecost. GOD the FATHER, in his covenant-office and character, through the

Old Testament dispensation, had all along been manifesting his everlasting love to the Church, in proclaiming the Person, Work, and Glory of his dear SON; and under the New Testament dispensation, when CHRIST appeared, he confirmed the same by a voice from heaven, in a public and audible manner, in the presence of the people, declaring the identity of JESUS, by saying, *this is my beloved SON, in whom I am well pleased*, Matthew 3:17; Luke 9:35; John 12:28. GOD the SON, before his openly tabernacling in substance of our flesh, is expressly said to have *been in the Church in the wilderness, when he spake to Moses in the Mount Sinai with our fathers*, for so *Stephen*, when filled with the HOLY GHOST, and speaking therefore under the influence of his divine teaching, declared, Acts 7:37-38, and which, by the way, it may be observed, throws a light on many other parts of the Old Testament Scripture, in proof that it was CHRIST who all along manifested himself as the *Shechinah* to the Church. So that when *the fulness of time was come*, and the SON of GOD was to make his open appearance in our nature, he came as GOD *manifest in the flesh*, entered upon, and finished his office-work of redemption, and returned to glory. See Genesis 12:7; Genesis 32:24, &c; Exodus 24:9 to the end. And GOD the HOLY GHOST, thought he had all along presided over the Church, (which he himself founded,) during the whole of the Old Testament dispensation, yet now comes at the day of Pentecost in an open manifestation of himself, in his Person, GODHEAD, and Ministry, and makes himself known as the Almighty Teacher in the Church, to render the whole effectual of salvation-work in the hearts of his people. See 1 Peter 1: 10-11; 2 Peter 1:21; Hebrews 9:1-8. And wherefore all these glorious manifestations of each divine person, and all but to testify to

the Church that the whole GODHEAD is alike concerned, and alike entitled to the adoration, love, obedience, and praise of the whole Church of JESUS, for their joint favor to the Church before all worlds, in her present time-state on earth, and her everlasting happiness to all eternity.

I do not think it necessary in a work of this kind to enter into a critical enquiry concerning the appearances here made by the HOLY GHOST. It will be sufficient to remark that the whole plainly proved *the* LORD the SPIRIT'S personal presence, his Almighty power and ministry in his government over the Church. The *suddenness* of it implied how unexpected the manifestations of his grace are in all instances. The direction *coming from heaven*, proved that the blessed SPIRIT is from above, agreeably to Scripture, James 1:17. The *sound*, as of *crushing mighty wind*, was in exact conformity to what the LORD JESUS had before said, when speaking of the work of GOD the HOLY GHOST, whose operations are like the unknown and unexplored source of the air, *which bloweth where it listeth*, John 3:8, See Commentary there. The appearances of *cloven tongues, like as of fire*, were suitable to denote his presence, who is *a Spirit of judgment, and a Spirit of burning*. Isaiah iv. 4. And their *sitting upon the head of each of them*, graciously taught, that where the LORD the SPIRIT came, he would abide for ever. So the LORD JESUS taught his disciples to expect, and, blessed be GOD, so his people know, John 14:16-17. But what I would yet more particularly beg the Reader to notice, from all these different manifestations, is, that they all proved the Person, GODHEAD, and Ministry of the HOLY GHOST. And I beg of him to observe, that this manifestation at Pentecost was as folly and decidedly in proof of GOD the HOLY GHOST'S office-

work in the covenant, (as far as an open appearance became necessary,) as the personal appearance of the SON of GOD manifest in the flesh, was for his part in this mysterious work. The one is as demonstrative as the other. Reader! do not hastily pass away from meditating on these things. Carry them about with you wherever you go, as so many credentials of your faith, in the present awful day of infidelity with which the Church of GOD is surrounded.

ACTS 2:4

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

I beg the Reader, while attending to what is here said of the disciples being filled with the HOLY GHOST, to observe, that it doth not mean to imply they had not been in a state of regeneration before. Very evident it is, that the Apostles to whom JESUS addressed himself in his farewell Sermon, were at that time acquainted with the gracious influences of the SPIRIT, and consequently regenerated. If the Reader will consult what the LORD then said respecting the HOLY GHOST, in their *knowledge of Him*, and of his *dwelling with them*, and being *in them*, he will perceive that these things implied a state of grace different from the world, John 14:16-17. But the being filled with the HOLY GHOST, as is here spoken of, meant (what the LORD JESUS had taught them to expect, and to wait for at *Jerusalem*,) their ordination to the ministry. This was the blessed work wrought at *Pentecost*. And now, ordained by GOD the HOLY GHOST, their mouths were opened to declare among the people *the unsearchable riches of CHRIST*. If the Reader would wish to see similar instances of this holy ordination, he may behold them in the case of

several of the LORD'S servants, Isaiah 6:7-10; Jeremiah 1 throughout; Ezekiel 2; Acts 13:2-4. See the Commentary on this last scripture.

I take occasion from hence to observe the difference between regeneration, which is essential to every child of GOD for his personal enjoyment of an union and interest with CHRIST, and the unction of the HOLY GHOST, when calling his sent servants to the ministry. For, though the LORD calls none to the ministry but whom he hath first called by grace, as is evident in the instance of the Apostles, yet multitudes are savingly called by regeneration for their own personal happiness in CHRIST, whom GOD the HOLY GHOST never sends forth as his ministers. A man being regenerated is no authority for ministering in the word and doctrine. And to run unsent, is a solemn thing, Jeremiah 23:20; Hebrews 5:4.

ACTS 2:5-11

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. (6) Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. (7) And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? (8) And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? (9) Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, (10) Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, (11) Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

It is well worthy the observation of the Reader, how the LORD, by the ordinary method of his providence, overruled this event, that it should take place at this particular season, to

render it more public to the world. As the death and resurrection of CHRIST took place at the *first* great Jewish feast, the Passover, so the first coming of the HOLY GHOST, in this signal and open display of divine power, should take place at the *second* great feast of *Pentecost*, Hence both were so admirably timed, that multitudes from all parts, which came up for the sake of trade, at those Jewish feasts at *Jerusalem*, should be eye and ear witnesses to the LORD's glory. Reader! think of these things, and learn to reverence and adore the LORD, both in the appointments of his providences, as well as in the manifestations of his grace.

The consternation occasioned in *Jerusalem* by these prodigies, may be better conceived than described. Let the Reader figure to himself those poor humble fishermen of Galilee, the natives of a little despised city, whose inhabitants were dull and unlearned, even to a proverb, (John 1:46.) let him fancy that he beholds one Apostle speaking to a *Parthian*, another to a *Mede*, another to an *Elamite*, without the help of an interpreter, as had always been done before; and let him call to mind that the Apostles addresses were not of earthly things, but of the wonderful works of GOD, and then let him pause and ponder over the Almighty ministry of GOD the SPIRIT! Here were no less than *fifteen* different nations of the earth brought together on this occasion, and all of them distinguished by a different language. And to these different nations those poor, humble, untaught fishermen of *Galilee*, were at once qualified to talk on the great things of GOD in their own mother tongue in which they were born with the greatest fluency of language! What will the Reader say to these things? What less could it be than the power of GOD,

and the wisdom of GOD, speaking in them and by them to the blessed purposes of salvation? JESUS had said that his disciples should speak with new tongues. And here we see the LORD's promise fulfilled, Mark 16:17. And, Reader! shall not you and I depend upon the promises of JESUS?

I beg to call the Reader's attention to one beauty as discoverable in this miracle, which perhaps in the first view may not so immediately strike him; I mean the wonderful circumstance with which GOD the HOLY GHOST here begun his ministry, in restoring to his servants, the Apostles, the use of tongues, which was made confusion in the first instance at the building of *Babel*. In the early world, when the Sin of men taught rebellion against GOD, the LORD confounded their language. Before this, *the whole earth was of one language, and one speech*, Genesis 11: 1-9. And it was GOD's own language. It was sacred. It was divine. And no doubt it was a blessing to mankind. For it not only promoted a general intercourse and good will between man and man, but being the sacred language, it tended to preserve the knowledge of the LORD throughout the earth. But, when for sin man lost this privilege, what difficulties for apprehension must have occurred? But, who should have thought, that in the designs and stores of omnipotency, the LORD would have made this sin of man the very foundation of bringing forth greater mercy, and have made that which sprung out of evil to become the very means of greater good? And yet so it was. This miracle of enabling the Apostles to speak various languages in a moment of time, would never have had an opportunity for display, had not the tower of *Babel*, and the confusion of tongues taken place. So that here, as in a

thousand instances beside, the LORD overrules the unworthiness of his creatures to his glory, and renders their weakness the means of manifesting his strength. *Oh! the depths of the riches both of the wisdom, and knowledge of GOD! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out,* Romans 11:33.

ACTS 2:12-13

And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? (13) Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

I detain the Reader over these two verses, just to call his attention to the very different effects here described, which were wrought upon the minds of the different characters beholding this miracle. Pause, Reader, at the view. What but divine teaching could have made this difference? Here is *one* set of men struck with awe at the wonderful works of GOD. And here *is another* attempting to turn the solemn work of GOD the SPIRIT into ridicule. *One* praising GOD; and *another* blaspheming. And yet the work is the same. And is it not so now? Do not some mock, while others pray? Some laugh, while others mourn? Both not the same Gospel, the same preacher, produce these different effects? Reader! do you not know it? Have you never seen it? 2 Corinthians 2:15-16. And, Reader! depend upon it, such is, and must be the case for ever. If the devils in hell were liberated from their chains, devils they would still be. Nothing short of Almighty grace could make a change. If the Reader would see an awful representation of this, let him read what is said under the fourth and fifth vials poured out upon the seat of the beast. Revelation 16:8-11

ACTS 2:14-36

But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be ye known unto you, and hearken to my words: (15) For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. (16) But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; (17) And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: (18) And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: (19) And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: (20) The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: (21) And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. (22) Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: (23) Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: (24) Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. (25) For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: (26) Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: (27) Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. (28) Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. (29) Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. (30) Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; (31) He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. (32) This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. (33) Therefore being by the right hand of God

exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. (34) For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, (35) Until I make thy foes thy footstool. (36) Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

There must have been somewhat very striking, when *Peter* and the eleven all arose at once, as if (and which indeed was the case,) all animated by a supernatural power, to refute the foul calumny of drunkenness. And I beg the Reader to remark with me, how mildly the Apostle expostulated with their accusers, appealing to their own principles of religion, in proof of the falseness of what they had said, seeing it was now but the *third* hour of the day, namely, nine of the clock in the morning, the well-known hour of the morning sacrifice; before which, and especially on the Sabbath, which this was, it became unlawful for any of the seed of *Abraham* to indulge in bodily refreshment. Compare Numbers 28:1-10 with Exodus 12:16. Reader! so will every preacher, yea, every child of GOD, mildly reason with opposers, when under the blessed influences of GOD the HOLY GHOST, 2 Timothy 2:24-25.

I am constrained by the limits I must observe, from entering very largely into a Commentary upon this sweet Sermon of the Apostles. For the text which *Peter* took from the prophecy of *Joel*, I refer to some few observations I have already offered in my *Poor Man's Commentary* on the place. And in addition to what is there proposed, I would here remark, that by the *all flesh* the Prophet speaks of, and the Apostle comments upon, cannot be supposed to mean *all mankind*; but as other Scriptures explain the phrase, all God's people in

all places; and not confined, as the early Prophets had supposed to be the case, to the people of *Judaea*. Thus *Haggai*, when speaking of CHRIST, calls him the *desire of all nations*, Haggai 2:7, meaning the desire of his people in all nations. So CHRIST, when speaking of the world, *GOD so loved the world*, that all that believe in him, &c. meaning believers throughout the world, John 3:16. That the phrase must be understood in this sense, is evident, from what is said in other parts of scripture concerning the world, which cannot receive the SPIRIT of truth, and for whom CHRIST doth not pray. See John 14:17 and John 17:9-10.

Let me particularly request the Reader to observe how *Peter* speaks of his divine LORD. A *man* he calleth him approved of GOD, among them by miracles and wonders as they knew. But while a man, truly and properly so, (for otherwise he could not have been the seed of the woman promised, Genesis 3:15.) yet, as truly and properly GOD, whom *the pains of death could not hold, because 9* (saith Peter,) *it was not possible that he should be holden of it*. Reader! what higher demonstrations can be wished in proof of GODHEAD. Surely common sense must say, that had he not been GOD, the pains of death and the power of the grave must have held him, as they would hold any man, and make every man a prisoner. But, in the person of the GOD-man CHRIST JESUS, it was not possible, that *he* who was both GOD and man should be holden of either. And, as another Apostle saith, and under the same authority, *JESUS was declared to be the SON of GOD with power, according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead*, Romans 1:4. How very blessed and precious

are both testimonies to the union of the nature of GOD and man, in the person of our LORD !

I request the Reader's attention to another beautiful part in *Peter's* sermon. He saith, that CHRIST was delivered *by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of GOD*, when crucified and slain by wicked hands. Oh! what a very blessed relation is here, to *the truth as it is in JESUS*? For what can be more blessed to every child of GOD, while *rejoicing in hope of the glory of GOD*, through the blood and righteousness of CHRIST as a Savior; than to see the hand of JEHOVAH in the appointment? In this united point of view, GOD our Redeemer's full equivalent sacrifice for sin, (yea, more than equivalent, as a ransom for the sins of all his people,) we find a blessed plea before the mercy-seat in all our approaches there; in that we find all the strength necessary to make it blessed, because it is also from the appointment and ordination of JEHOVAH. Hence, we not only plead on the footing of CHRIST'S blood and righteousness; but we plead, when we plead rightly, the LORD'S appointment of it, and his approbation and pleasure in the Almighty work. Is it not sweet then, yea, very sweet, to bear back to the throne, what comes first from the throne, and to tell our GOD and FATHER, what our GOD and FATHER hath first told us; that it was JEHOVAH *which bruised* our glorious Head, and *put him to grief, when he made his soul an offering for sin*; that it was JEHOVAH *which laid on Him the iniquities of us all*, when *by the determinate counsel of GOD, by wicked hands he was taken, and crucified, and slain*? And, that the hand of the LORD was first in the great work, when JESUS was *delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification*? Reader! what

correspondence is there from the teachings of GOD the HOLY GHOST, in your heart with these things? Oh! the blessedness of being able to join the voice of Old Testament saints, now we have seen the accomplishment of the whole to New Testament believers, and say as they did, *Behold, O God! our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed?* Happy the man, who amidst all the remains of indwelling corruption within, and the ungodly world without, the demands of law and justice, and all the accusations of Satan, can, and doth, go daily to the pardon office of JESUS CHRIST, pleading his blood and righteousness, and JEHOVAH'S covenant promises, the joint security of everlasting salvation. See Isaiah 53:5-6; Romans 4:25; Psalm 84:9.

Let me beg the Reader not to overlook the mercy and love of GOD the HOLY GHOST, in another sweet part of *Peter's* sermon, namely, the explanation of the sixteenth Psalm, in direct reference to the LORD JESUS CHRIST. There can be no doubt from the manner in which *Peter* spake upon it, in begging permission to speak freely of the Patriarch David, but that the Jews of those days, considered that psalm as written by *David*, in allusion to himself. What a blessed scripture, therefore, it is, to have it thus explained with an eye to CHRIST, and from such authority. And may we not observe that from the illustration of this psalm, we derive information upon many other occasions of a similar nature, to make application to CHRIST? Reader! do not forget to notice *Peter's* appeal from the whole, to the hearts and minds of his hearers. How affectionate, yet how faithful the Apostle is. *Let them know*, (saith he,) *even the whole house of Israel*, what the result of this wonderful event is. To JESUS shall every knee

bow. He whom ye crucified, is now the Almighty and everlasting LORD of heaven and of earth! Reader! behold the bold, the undaunted Apostle! Oh! what did grace accomplish in him! And why not in you, or me? LORD! the SPIRIT! do thou in thy rich mercy make thy servants faithful! Speak, LORD, *in* them and *by* them, and let all whom thou hast sent, do *the work of Evangelists, and make full proof of their ministry!*

ACTS 2:37-40

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? (38) Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. (39) For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. (40) And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

Behold the wonderful grace of GOD, as here manifested! How sudden, how powerful, how gracious! Surely, the LORD the SPIRIT here wrought by his Almighty sovereignty, on the hearts of those *Jerusalem* sinners. And, was not this in proof of what JESUS had said and promised? John 1:50; John 14:12. But, let not the Reader forget, that the same LORD still carrieth on the same works of grace, and is as much the Almighty LORD in his Church, as ever!

And I pray the Reader to remark with me, the characters of those, to whom such grace was shewn. No doubt from what *Peter* said, (verse 23; Acts:2:23) that many of those who were now pricked in their heart, were among those who joined the rabble, to crucify the LORD of life and glory. Oh! who that knew these wonderful events, but must have

exclaimed, *what hath GOD wrought!* The Reader will probably recollect, upon this occasion, some of these scriptures, Hosea 6:5; Hebrews 4:12; Jeremiah 23:29.

It is well worthy observation, how very natural it is with sinners of all descriptions and characters, under the first alarms of sin, to cry out, *what must I do to be saved!* Every carnal mind is for *doing*, although all his life past he hath done nothing but sin. But, such is the pride of human nature in an unhumbed, unregenerate state, John 6:28; Acts 9:6; Acts 16:30.

The Apostle's answer to their anxious question, deserves to be well attended to, when saying to them, *repent and be baptized.* Did *Peter* mean to say, that repentance was in every man's power to perform? Surely the Apostle could not, for in a subsequent discourse before the Jewish council, he expressly ascribes the work to CHRIST. *Him*, (saith Peter,) *hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins,* Acts 5:30-31. What, therefore, is CHRIST'S gift, cannot be man's work. And, moreover, *Peter* commanded them to *repent*, and then to be *baptized*, that they might receive the gifts of the HOLY GHOST. So that the repentance *Peter* enjoined, was to go before the gifts of the HOLY GHOST, and not to *follow*, And so the Prophet in the LORD'S name promised, in the latter day dispensation, *to pour out a spirit of grace, and of supplication;* and then godly mourning and true sorrow should follow, in prompting them to look to Him *whom they had pierced*, Zechariah 12:10. Hence it should seem, that the repentance *Peter* called upon them to perform, differed from that which is the gift of God.

And it is worthy remark, that CHRIST, and his harbinger, *John* the Baptist, preached the same, Matthew 3:1 and Matthew 4:17. And no doubt there is a repentance, which is simply the sorrow of nature, arising from natural causes, and produced by natural means; and which differs as widely from the spiritual sorrow of the heart, inwrought by the HOLY GHOST, by reason of sin; as the rain of pools which dry up for want of supply, from the water of the fountain, which forms a living spring in the heart, springing up to everlasting life. Every carnal mind upon earth, more or less, knows this repentance; for when sin brings sickness, and sickness threatens death, the sinner will naturally repent his folly. *Peter* calls upon those *Jerusalem* sinners, to repent of their wickedness, in their false views of CHRIST and his Messiahship; and in testimony of that sorrow, to be baptized in his name for the remission of sins, and to receive gifts of the HOLY GHOST.

I beg to observe on the form of baptism enjoined by *Peter*, that it differed from what the LORD JESUS himself appointed, when giving his final commission to the Apostles. This of *Peter* was to be baptized in the name of JESUS CHRIST. That of CHRIST himself was in the joint name of the whole three Persons of the GODHEAD, Matthew 28:19. But here lay the difference. The Jews to whom *Peter* addressed himself, had hitherto denied the Person and GODHEAD of CHRIST as the Messiah. They acknowledged GOD the FATHER; and believed in the SPIRIT, as speaking in, and by the Prophets. So that by following what *Peter* commanded of being baptized in the name of JESUS CHRIST, implied also the whole Persons of the GODHEAD as included. But CHRIST'S commission to his Apostles, had respect to the Gentiles, who were alike ignorant of all the

Persons of the GODHEAD: and therefore the LORD mentioned all.

One observation more I beg to offer on this most precious sermon of the Apostles, namely, the sure consequences *Peter* promised, in the gifts of the HOLY GHOST; that is, I apprehend, all the saving gifts of the SPIRIT necessary to salvation. Not the more special operations of the HOLY GHOST needful to the Apostolic office, but only such, as suited their own personal sanctification. For had all these, received miraculous qualifications for the ministry the Apostles needed not, as they soon afterwards did, to recommend the Church to look out seven men of honest report, to exercise the office of deacons, Acts 6:3. And in relation to the promise of the HOLY GHOST, how sweetly the Apostle finished the subject, in shewing the extensiveness of it, while bounded by the LORD's call. So ran the charter of grace, in the original Covenant with *Abraham*, Genesis 17:7. So the LORD confirmed it in the days of the Prophets: Isaiah 44:3 and Isaiah 49:21. And so all the after ages of the Church found it, both Jew and Gentile, subject to the divine call, Psalm 103:3. Oh! the preciousness of a Covenant, *ordered in all things and sure*, 2 Samuel 23:5; Galatians 3:28.

ACTS 2:41-47

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. (42) And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. (43) And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. (44) And all that believed were together, and had all things common; (45) And sold their

possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. (46) And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, (47) Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Here we have the gracious, arid blissful consequences resulting from the whole, in the powerful operations of GOD the HOLY GHOST, by the instrumentality of *Peter's* Sermon. *Three thousand Souls*, savingly converted on the spot, to the knowledge and love of JESUS! What a specimen, in the first fruits of the HOLY GHOST'S descending, of what in the after harvest the LORD the SPIRIT would gather in, to the Church of GOD! And behold, what continued evidences followed, to the compleatness of the work. A stedfast continuing in doctrine; and a continued observance of ordinances. And while those who received the HOLY GHOST, in his gifts and graces received all that was needful to their *private* sanctification; the Apostles received the power of working miracles, in proof of their *public* ministry. An holy fear came upon all beholders. The most unbounded charity brake out among all the faithful. The temple, or private house; the public assembly, or the private meeting; all resounded with the adorable name of JESUS. And so much of GOD appeared in all the deportment of those holy men, at this most blessed season, that it was one continued festival. And JEHOVAH in his threefold character of Person, gave such testimony to the word of his grace, that daily the LORD called his own *from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan to the living* GOD. Oh! blessed *Pentecost* of a blessed GOD! LORD! grant in this latter day of thy Church a renewed Pentecost to manifest thy glory!

REFLECTIONS

BLESSED be GOD; FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, for all the blessings vouchsafed the Church, in all the Covenant purposes, before all worlds: and for all the mercies in the time-state of the Church, through all dispensations. Oh! blessed hour, when JESUS, having finished redemption-work, returned to glory; and GOD the HOLY GHOST came down, to render effectual his great salvation! Do thou blessed holy LORD, still vouchsafe thy *Pentecost-days* to thy Church; until, not only three thousand souls, but thousands of thousands, yea, every one to whom this promise is made, to all that are afar off, and to all that are nigh, even as many as the LORD our GOD shall call, shall *know the joyful sound, and walk in the light of thy divine countenance!*

Ye ministers of my GOD! seek for the daily proofs of your Apostle-ship, in the anointings, and ordination of the LORD'S *Pentecost* visits! And ye, no less, of the LORD'S people, who have hitherto lived, unconscious of the resurrection of JESUS, from any saving testimony of it in your hearts; be on the look out for those ascension-gifts of a risen and exalted SAVIOR, whose gracious act it is, *to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins*. Oh! for the out-pouring of the SPIRIT upon all the LORD'S redeemed ones, that there may be daily added to the Church, *such as should be saved*.

CHAPTER 3

CONTENTS

*Peter and John heal a Cripple at the Gate of the Temple.
Peter takes Occasion therefrom to preach to the People.*

ACTS 3:1

Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

We have here the entrance into the history of a miracle wrought by two of the Apostles, *Peter* and *John*, on a cripple, in the name and by the authority of their Divine Master the LORD JESUS CHRIST. It appears to me, that beside the fact of the thing itself, it hath a sweet spiritual allusion to the crippled state of our nature: and as such, upon both occasions, it may well merit our close attention.

We are told, that those two dear brethren, *Peter* and *John*, were going up together at the *ninth* hour to the temple; that is three of the clock in the afternoon, the hour of prayer: meaning the time of the evening sacrifice. This was the memorable hour of CHRIST'S death on the cross; and to which all the evening sacrifices of the temple, from the first moment of their appointment to the death of JESUS, had respect. *David's* hour, Psalm 55:17. *Daniel's* sweet hour, Daniel 9:21. See also Exodus 29:38-39.

ACTS 3:2

And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; This certain poor man, it appears, from Acts 4:22. was now at this time forty years old: and as he never had walked, having been lame from his birth, had most probably been often, if not daily, laid at this gate of the temple, by way of exciting the compassion of the feeling, to soften his indigence by their alms. And what can more strikingly represent the crippled state of our fallen helpless

nature? Every son and daughter *of Adam* is born so, and hath been lame from the womb. We may be laid down as this poor man was, at the gate of the temple or in the way of ordinances, but never until an act of grace be passed upon us, shall we truly walk in the temple of the LORD. Forty years long the LORD was grieved with Israel, and the LORD said, they have not known my ways. And this cripple at the beautiful gate might have lain there unhealed, had not *Peter* and *John* passed by to give his feet and ankle bones strength, in the name of the LORD. And spiritually considered, as well as in body, there is no healing for the soul, but in JESUS;

ACTS 3:3-4

Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. (4) And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.

The poor man had no consciousness of being healed of his lameness, and only asked the aim for the supply of the body. The crippled sinner, in like manner, until made sensible by grace of the blessedness of healing, hath no apprehension of any cure to the lameness of the soul. Both, in those instances, are the same.

ACTS 3:5-8

And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. (6) Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. (7) And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. (8) And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

It must have been a delightful sight, to have seen these poor Apostles, acting in the faith of the LORD, and the power of the HOLY GHOST, in this wonderful manner. And no less astonishing must have been the expression of countenance of

the cripple, when, instead of money, he found strength in his bones; and he who had never walked, entering with his benefactors into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God! But, Reader! think, if it were possible to be the object of our sight, how much greater would it be, to behold the LORD JESUS himself passing by, and bidding the crippled faculties of our souls to arise and walk: and to feel JESUS taking his redeemed by the hand, and lifting them up! Oh! the inexpressible joy, when at the name of JESUS CHRIST of *Nazareth*, and in the power of his strength, poor crippled sinners, yea, dead sinners, and from their mother's womb dead in trespasses and sins, are called into spiritual life; and walk, and leap, and enter with JESUS into the temple, and the galleries of his grace, walking, and leaping, and praising God! And who shall say the numbers, or who shall write down the greatness, of the cure; in the daily cases where JESUS manifests the riches of his grace, in restoring life and health to his people! Exodus 15:6; Isaiah 61:1-3, with Luke 4:18, &c.

ACTS 3:9-10

And all the people saw him walking and praising God: (10) And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

There is somewhat particularly affecting, in what is said, of the healed cripple holding fast the garments of his benefactors: clinging to them, as we may suppose, not only to manifest his attachment to their persons, for the mercy he had received, through their hands; but also to hear more of Him, by whose sovereign and Almighty name he had found a cure! But, Reader! with what holy ardor doth a soul, truly saved in CHRIST, follow JESUS in the regeneration, and cleave

to Him, because he then knows him *to be his life*. He feels, and is conscious, of his daily need of JESUS; he is convinced that every act of faith, and love, can only be kept alive, by the grace that is in CHRIST JESUS. See Deuteronomy 10:20; Psalm 89:16; Hosea 14:8; Psalm 71:15-16; Acts 11:23.

Perhaps the Reader will think with me, what a wonderful effect also, was wrought upon the minds of the whole neighbourhood who knew this cripple from his birth, or at least for a long time; when they saw him, after forty years total infirmity, now leaping and walking. What views must they have had of the poor Apostles! And what greater apprehensions of the person and glory of the LORD JESUS CHRIST! But, Reader! cannot you and I, bear testimony to the word of the LORD's grace, in a much greater demonstration of the sovereign power of JESUS; in a spiritual recovery, to the crippled, yea, the dead faculties of our souls? Yes! if so be the LORD himself hath opened the eyes of our understanding, or our deaf ears to discipline: hath given strength to the feet and ankle-bones of our spirits, in enabling us to run the way of his commandments, having set our souls at liberty! Here is a subject of still greater astonishment, when grace hath passed upon the heart, and that gracious prophecy concerning the LORD JESUS, is fulfilled: *Behold, your God will come and save you! then the eyes of the blind shall he opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped: the lame man shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing,* Isaiah 35:1-6.

ACTS 3:11-16

And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. (12) And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at

this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? (13) The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. (14) But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; (15) And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. (16) And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Reader! I charge it upon your heart, while I desire to feel the full impression of it upon my own, that in attending to this very precious Sermon of *Peter's*, we do not overlook the ministry in it, of GOD the HOLY GHOST. It is delightful to behold the animation of the servant in the LORD'S cause: but never to forget from whence the whole energy is derived, in the master. And I pray the Reader to call to mind, the particular area of the times, when this miracle, and preaching took place. The SON of GOD, having finished redemption-work, had just before returned to heaven. And GOD the HOLY GHOST was now come down, in a more open manifestation of himself, to carry on the glorious cause. His special act, therefore, as the Original and Almighty Architect of the Church, was *to build up the tabernacle of David which was fallen down, and close up the breaches thereof*, Amos 9:11. Hence, the whole ministers to his glory. And it is blessed, yea, very blessed, at every verse we pass over, in this wonderful account, to watch, and mark, the footsteps of the HOLY GHOST; and like the Prophet on the watch tower, to be on the look out, for the LORD'S manifestations, in what we read, of his grace in our hearts, Habakkuk 2:1-2.

Let the Reader not fail to observe, with what energy and power, under the influence of GOD the SPIRIT, *Peter* opened his animated discourse. He begins with humbly declining all pretensions to himself, and his partner *John*, of any merit or worth, from the deed Wrought in the cripple; and strives to call off the attention of the people, in the astonishment which they had expressed, from them, as instruments; in order to fix their views on JESUS, as the Author, And having thus called forth their notice, he begins with a text from their own Scriptures, which they were supposed all of them to be well acquainted with, in relation to the Covenant. *The GOD of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob: the GOD (said he) of our fathers.* Nothing could have been more happily chosen, by way of arresting their attention. And no higher proof could be needed in testimony, that the LORD the SPIRIT both directed the Apostle's mind, to the choice of this scripture; and gave to the Apostle's mouth, ability to unfold, and explain it to the people. While the Apostle was speaking to them of *Abraham's* GOD, and the GOD of their fathers; he could be setting forth no strange gods, or new gods, as *Moses* charged some of old with, newly come up, which neither they, nor their fathers knew, *Abraham's* GOD, in his threefold character of Persons, was well known, and well proclaimed in the scriptures of eternal truth. Here therefore *Peter* takes his stand, and demands their attention.

Having thus paved the way by a foundation for discourse, which as the *Israel* of GOD they could not but acknowledge, it was the very principles of their religion to stand upon: *Peter* next advanced to the one great subject of all his, and all the Apostles' preaching; namely, the LORD JESUS CHRIST in his

Person, GODHEAD, Offices, Characters, and Relations: and to set him forth as GOD had set him forth, in the word of his grace. *The GOD of our fathers*, (said he,) *Abraham's GOD* in Covenant, hath *glorified his SON JESUS*. Reader! pause over the blessed words, for they are most blessed. The whole design of JEHOVAH, from beginning to end, and from one eternity to another, through all the time-state of the Church, is *to glorify his SON JESUS*. The *Bible* is to this one end, and is full to this, and this only purpose. Every *Promise* centers but in Him; yea, JESUS himself is but as one promise, for every other is comprehended, and folded up in this One, 2 Corinthians 1:20. Every *Precept*, both under the law, and the Gospel, tends but to exalt CHRIST JESUS, For by him the whole have been fulfilled, and *he is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*, Romans 10:4. And as they relate to his people in him, the whole is comprehended in looking to CHRIST, and believing on him, John 6:28-29. Every *Ordinance* is intended to minister but to him: indeed CHRIST himself is the One great Ordinance of JEHOVAH; *for there is salvation in no other, neither is there any other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*, Acts 4:12. Reader! what saith the experience of your heart to these things? You see, that the great will and purpose of JEHOVAH, is, to glorify his SON JESUS. Is this your will and purpose also? Do you make him, what JEHOVAH hath made him, the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: the Author and Finisher of faith? Oh! how sweet is it, when a poor sinner discovers, that He, who is JEHOVAH's salvation to the ends of the earth, is his saltation also. He is *the praise of all his saints; the people near to him!* Revelation 1:8; Revelation 1:11; Hebrews 12:2; *Isaiah* 49:6; PSALM 148:14

It is well worthy the observation of the Reader, with what firmness the Apostle chargeth the men of *Israel*, with the crucifixion of Jesus. He hesitateth not to bring it home to their consciences. And what I admire in this short, but sweet sermon of *Peter's*, is, that while he bears testimony to the *human* nature of CHRIST, in the proof arising from his death; he most decidedly proves his *divine* nature in the strong terms by which he calls them: the Holy One, and the Prince (or Giver) of life. And in relation to the miracle wrought, he refers the whole into his Almighty name. And his *name* (saith Peter) *through faith in his name hath made this man strong whom ye see and know*. Reader! do not overlook in this place that faith, upon all occasions, hath for its whole object and dependence, the Person of CHRIST. I beg the Reader to consult a few of the many scriptures which speak of CHRIST, as the Holy One, and the Holy One of Israel: for they can refer to no other, Deuteronomy 33:8; Psalm 16:10; Psalm 89:19; Isaiah 41:14; Isaiah 43:3; Isaiah 49:7; Daniel 4:13; Hebrews 1:12; Mark 2:24.

ACTS 3:17-26

And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. (18) But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. (19) Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; (20) And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: (21) Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. (22) For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. (23) And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from

among the people. (24) Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. (25) Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. (26) Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

When the Apostle had thus clenched his doctrine, by a train of the most decided and unanswerable arguments, and from their own Scriptures; and confirmed the whole by a miracle wrought before their own eyes; he then endeavors to bring home the subject from the head to the heart. And who but must admire, the very sweet, persuasive, and conciliating manner, which he used upon the occasion. But let us not overlook the cause, nor in the Apostle's words forget the Apostle's LORD. It was GOD the SPIRIT, speaking in him, and by him! And must not all sermons be persuasive, when *the Gospel is preached with the HOLY GHOST sent down from heaven?* 1 Peter 1:12.

I do not think it necessary to enlarge on the several parts of Peter's exhortation after his sermon. Every thing in it is plain and easy to be understood. The chief object of the Apostle was to lead their minds to CHRIST. He shews the LORD JESUS to have been the One great object, all along intended, from the Scriptures of truth, as the promised *Messiah*. He aims to soften the anger of their minds against themselves, in ascribing their rejection of CHRIST to their ignorance. But he shews no less, that what in times past might have been pleaded for want of knowledge; now it is known, if neglected, will prove their destruction. He calls upon them, as he had

done before, (see Acts 2: 37-40. and Commentary,) to the exercise of that repentance, which nature herself dictates, when the conscience is made sensible of error. And he tells them, that in the refreshing of the LORD, their sins may be blotted out. In short, *Peter* makes a most affectionate appeal to the hearts of the people, and concludes with one of the sweetest entreaties language can furnish, to the children of GOD, whom he tells them they are. *Unto you first*, entitled by every claim to be first spoken to, (Luke 24:47; Acts 13:26.) GOD *having raised up his SON JESUS sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.*

REFLECTIONS

WHAT a sweet thought is it to my soul, that to all the crippled faculties of my fallen nature; the name of JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth can make me whole. Yea, his name, through faith in his name, will give a perfect soundness to all his redeemed. LORD! grant that in all my approaches to thy house of prayer, I may go always in thy name, making mention of thy righteousness, even thine only. And oh! with what holy joy and rapture, shall I tread thy courts, when GOD the[31] Almighty GOD of our fathers! the GOD of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*; thou hast indeed glorified thy SON JESUS! Oh! LORD, send down thine ascension-gifts, and bless my soul, in all the sweet manifestations of thy love. In thee, and by thee, and from thee, let all my joy be found. As a child in the Covenant, which GOD made with our fathers, being CHRIST'S, and consequently *Abraham's* seed, and an heir according to the promise; let all my springs arise, and let that assurance to the

great father of the faithful be mine also: *In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.*

CHAPTER 4

CONTENTS

Peter, and John are put into prison. They are examined before the Council, threatened, and dismissed. The LORD gives a gracious Token of his Presence, in answering to their Prayers.

ACTS 4:1-4

And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, (2) Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. (3) And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide. (4) Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

Reader! mark in the awful characters of those men, the malice of hell, at the success of the Gospel. Can the imagination conceive any higher proof of the desperately wicked state of the human heart, than is here shewn? To imprison those Servants of the LORD, for so illustrious a miracle as JESUS had wrought, by their instrumentality. But, Reader! you will stop at the surface of this matter, if the LORD the SPIRIT doth not lead you deeper, to see, that all men by nature, and unawakened by grace, are the same. Both *Sadducees*, and *Pharisees; Priests* of the law, and mere *Professors* of the Gospel, unacquainted with the plague of their own heart, are all the same. All such as are grieved, as

well as those of old, whenever, and wheresoever salvation is freely and fully preached, in the alone name of JESUS, without complimenting their good works; but solely ascribing salvation by grace alone, to the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

But turn from such characters, to behold the blessedness of those servants, whom the LORD so highly honored. Oh! happy *Peter*, happy *John*! surely your prison became a palace, and your chains, chains of gold, while the LORD was thus loading you with such distinguishing honors! I apprehend, that the *five thousand*, here said *to* have believed, were in addition to the *three thousand*, recorded on the day of *Pentecost*: so that both together, made *eight thousand*. Oh! the wonders of that wonder-working GOD the HOLY GHOST? Well might the Evangelist close his Gospel with saying, that the Apostles went forth and preached every where, *the LORD working with them, and confirming the word with signs following*, Mark 16:20. Reader! think what a melancholy contrast the present hour of the Church affords. Here we read but of two sermons, and what a harvest of souls were gathered in. And what multitudes of sermons are now preached, and no conversion follows. To what cause are we to ascribe it? Is it not because, unaccompanied with the ordination and blessing of GOD the HOLY GHOST? And can it be otherwise? If the HOLY GHOST be not honored. If men preach unsent by Him, and his presence be not implored, neither his blessing asked; no, nor his Almighty ministry acknowledged: can it be a matter of surprize, that *Ichabod* is on our Church doors, and *the glory is departed from Israel*? 1 Samuel 4:21. Oh! that the LORD the SPIRIT would give us a little reviving in our bondage; that *he*

that hath ears to hear, may hear what the SPIRIT saith unto the Churches, Revelation 2:29.

ACTS 4:5-7

And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, (6) And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. (7) And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?

What an awful Council this was become, composed of such awful characters. The Reader should be told, that this Council consisted, or ought to have consisted, of seventy Persons, the true Elders of Israel. It was first formed, by the LORD himself. See Numbers 11:16-17. But, now we find a motley crew; *Scribes*, and *Pharisees*, and *Sadducees*. For their character, as given by our LORD himself: See Matthew 23 throughout: See also Acts 23:8. Before such awful characters, the highly honored servants of the LORD JESUS CHRIST was brought. And I would have the Reader remark the blessedness of being so brought, because it afforded the opportunity for the Apostles to preach, and the Church, in all after ages, to read the record of what they said, under the teaching of GOD the HOLY GHOST. And I beg the Reader to remark with me how upon numberless occasions the LORD permits, yea, appoints the malice of men, to proceed to a desperate length sometimes, for the greater manifestation of his glory, and his peoples' good. If the Reader will turn to a single verse in one of the Psalms, and beg of the Almighty Author of Scripture, even GOD the HOLY GHOST, to write it in the tablets of his heart, to have recourse to as may be needed; he will find great blessedness in it. The verse is Psalm 105:25. *He turned their*

heart to hate his people, to deal subtly with his servants. Oh! how often hath this sweet Scripture taught my soul to look through the cobweb malice of men; and to discern the hand of a gracious, wise, and love ordering LORD, Ezekiel 1:26-28.

ACTS 4:8-12

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, (9) If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; (10) Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. (11) This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. (12) Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

What a blessed discourse is here! Behold, Reader, the wonderful effects of the SPIRIT'S influence. This is the same Apostle, whose timidity was such, when only confronted by a poor servant maid, that he was tempted to deny his LORD; and now, boldly chargeth the whole Jewish Council with the murder of CHRIST. Can your heart desire a more decisive proof, that the change was wrought by GOD the HOLY GHOST? See that Scripture, of JESUS'S promise, Mark 13:11. And observe how the Apostle, by that sweet figure of the Stone, JEHOVAH promised to lay in Zion, would lead them to their own Scriptures, in confirmation of *the truth as it is in* JESUS. See Isaiah 2:16; Matthew 21:42; Psalm 118: 23. And observe how the Apostle intimates, by declaring that there is salvation in no other, that their rejection of JESUS will bring on, and fulfill, that other Scripture, to the same amount, where the Prophet declares, that he shall be *a stone of stumbling and a rock of*

offence to both houses of Israel, Isaiah 8:14. Blessed LORD JESUS! do I not daily see thy solemn words concerning this Stone fulfilled? *Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder*, Matthew 21:44. LORD JESUS! do thou grant to my poor soul, that while thou art still *a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence*, to many who call themselves Christians, after the holy Name, but have never felt the power of thy holy SPIRIT, teaching them the plague of their own heart; I may be enabled by thy grace, to build my whole hopes of salvation on thee, the Rock of ages: convinced, most fully convinced, that *there is salvation in no other; neither any other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved!*

ACTS 4:13-22

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. (14) And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. (15) But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, (16) Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. (17) But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. (18) And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. (19) But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. (20) For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. (21) So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done. (22) For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was showed.

I pray the Reader never to lose sight of that most precious doctrine, that it was GOD the SPIRIT speaking in the Apostles, and by them: for without this steady eye to the LORD, we shall be apt to ascribe the boldness of the servants, to their own strength; and forget the source from whence they derived it. I admire the different apprehension of words in the world's dictionary, from that of grace. Those doctors of the law, it is said, perceived that *those Apostles were unlearned and ignorant men*. Yes! In relation to human sciences, and vain philosophy, falsely so called, *Peter* and *John* had received no education. But the HOLY GHOST, in giving his testimony, concerning that *wisdom which is from above*, and which *maketh wise unto salvation through the faith which is in CHRIST JESUS*; speaks very differently. He saith, that the precious things of his inspired word, and which to carnal men are *hard to be understood*, it is *the unlearned and unstable*, (that is, in divine science,) *wrest as they do also the other Scriptures to their own destruction*, 2 Peter 3:16. And here was a striking proof of it! For while those great men stood confounded and ashamed, unable to say any thing in their own justification; the poor Apostles silenced, and overawed them all! Reader! doth not the same doctrine, and from the same cause, operate in the present hour? *The weapons of our warfare* (said Paul,) *are not carnal, but mighty through GOD, to the pulling down of strong holds*, 2 Corinthians 10:4. And how otherwise should it be, that we sometimes see weak things of the world confound the things which are mighty, and foolish things confound what the world esteems wise; were it not that GOD hath chosen such for his instruments, to make manifest, that the excellency is of GOD, and not of men. Oh! the blessedness when men, taught and influenced by GOD

the SPIRIT, come forth in the LORD'S name, sent by the LORD'S ordination, and crowned with the LORD'S blessing upon their labors! 1 Corinthians 1:27.

Reader! it is sometimes profitable, to get behind the curtain of carnal men's council, not indeed to learn their works, but to see how dreadfully alarmed they are. And here the HOLY GHOST hath given us a short, but full relation, what frequently passeth there. For be assured, the conference of those convicted minds, as here represented, is a true statement of what every day, more or less, passeth among the unawakened in the world. They could not deny the miracle as a matter of fact, neither disprove the greatness of it. And one might have thought, that with such a conviction before their eyes, they would have embraced the Apostles, and sought mercy from the LORD. Ah, No! the thing was impossible. Yea, so impossible, that GOD the HOLY GHOST hath caused the reason to be recorded no less than seven times in his sacred word, Isaiah 6:9-10; Matthew 13:14; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:26; and Romans 9:8. And the same holds good for ever. And the LORD, at the very beginning of his Scriptures, with the first dawn of revelation, writes down, as with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond, the unalterable cause: *I will put enmity between thee and the woman: and between thy seed and her seed*, Genesis 3:15; John 8:43-44; 1 John 3:8.

ACTS 4:23-30

And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. (24) And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: (25) Who by the

mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? (26) The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. (27) For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, (28) For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. (29) And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, (30) By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

What a beautiful and lovely picture is here drawn, of the primitive Church! Reader! do observe the expression; *their own company*. Yes! The whole Church is One, and so the Great Head of the Church describes her, Song of Solomon 6:9. And contrast this, to the account given of *Judas* the traitor, whose fall is immediately followed with the consequence, that *he might go to his own place*, Acts 1:25.

And I pray the Reader to notice the grace, which instantly appeared in this assembly of the faithful: the LORD the SPIRIT led their minds out in prayer. And what a Scriptural prayer it was? The LORD be praised, who caused it to be recorded, for the comfort and edification of the Church in all ages. Here is a double proof of the Almighty ministry of the HOLY GHOST, in that He who guided *David's* pen to write, taught their tongues and hearts to speak. A plain proof that the same Almighty LORD presided over the Church in Old Testament days, as well as under the New Testament dispensation. And let not the Reader overlook, how uniformly those holy men of old, both in their prayers to the LORD, and their conversation with men, kept always in view, the LORD's purposes and decrees

concerning the redemption by JESUS, Acts 2:23; Acts 5:30; ACTS 10:38.

And is not this prayer more immediately directed to the Person of the HOLY GHOST, in his Office-character; and though (as all prayer are,) offered up to the whole Persons of the GODHEAD, through the Mediator, yet with a special eye to the office-work of the HOLY GHOST. Let it be remembered, that I do not decidedly say as much: I only ask the question. But, as we are told, that *no prophecy came in old time by the will of man, but holy men of GOD spake as they were moved by the HOLY GHOST*, 2 Peter 1:21: and the LORD is here addressed as speaking those words by the mouth of his servant *David*; Psalm 2:1-2, it should seem, to have been immediately a prayer to the HOLY GHOST. Moreover, the Apostles, in this prayer, particularly dwell upon the Person of the holy Child JESUS; and his being anointed: both which were the special acts of the HOLY GHOST. See Luke 1:35 and Luke 4:18. And therefore, it was from GOD the SPIRIT, who, but a few days, before, had baptized them, and called them by ordination to their ministry, that they now looked for all suited supplies of grace, to give them boldness, and to seal their authority, by the confirmation of miracles. Whether I am correct or not in this opinion, certain it is, that to GOD the HOLY GHOST the Apostles looked for the success of their labors. And it may serve to shew, how necessary it must be, in all the under pastors in the ministry of the Church, both to be satisfied that they have their commission *from* him; and *to* him to commit all their services.

ACTS 4:31

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

Reader! let you and I attend to the blessed contents of this verse, as not simply referring to the Church then in being, but to the Church of GOD in all ages. Surely such a testimony was designed to tell all the praying seed *of Jacob*; that the LORD, who is a prayer-awakening, is also a prayer-hearing, and a prayer-answering GOD, See Isaiah 65:24. And every child of GOD should learn from hence, that the LORD'S presence is always with his people, though the tokens of that presence be not shewn in the same way, of miraculously shaking the place of assembly. And as the company then present are said to have been all filled with the HOLY GHOST; so such renewings of the SPIRIT were intended to teach the Church, that as the HOLY GHOST'S baptism of the Apostles at Pentecost did not supersede the necessity of fresh effusions of grace, so neither doth the regeneration of his people now render unnecessary constant supplies from the LORD. See Titus 3:4-6. Oh! for the daily refreshings of the SPIRIT upon ministers and people!

ACTS 4:32-37

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. (33) And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. (34) Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, (35) And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. (36) And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, (37) Having

land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

What a golden age to the Church must this have been! How sweetly the love of GOD in CHRIST wrought upon the heart, when the streams of such a fountain diffused themselves in all directions! And how graciously the LORD gave testimony to the word of his grace, when the Apostles were enabled to shew miracles in witness of the truth; and the people with one heart and soul shewing forth no less the miracle of mercy wrought in them by the HOLY GHOST. Oh! for the renewal of such *Pentecost* seasons, if it were the LORD'S will and pleasure! Oh! for many, many such as *Barnabas* to arise, as *sons of consolation*, in the distressing times of the present day. And, oh! that the LORD the SPIRIT would return to this our sinful land, and thereby fulfill that sweet promise, that by a pure language *his people might all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent*, Zephaniah 3:9. Nothing short of this can do to restore health to Zion. No arm, but the arm of JEHOVAH the SPIRIT, can cut *Rahab, and wound the dragon*, Isaiah 51:9. Without the outpouring of the SPIRIT, no heart of stone can be softened, nor the CHRIST-despising generation in which we dwell be removed. But, if the LORD in rich mercy will pour out of his holy SPIRIT upon us from on high, *then will our wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest*, Isaiah 32:15. Reader! shall we not then say to the HOLY GHOST, in his own most blessed words, *Awake! awake! put on strength, O arm of the LORD! Awake, as in the ancient days, in generations of old, Isaiah 2:9.*

REFLECTIONS

LET us ponder well those precious things contained in this Chapter, which are so freely given to us of GOD! And let us particularly keep in remembrance, that all that is here recorded of the prosperity of the Church, arose from the blessed Person and Office-work of GOD the HOLY GHOST! We behold him here, under many of those most gracious characters in which the LORD JESUS promised him before his departure. As the LORD the SPIRIT is the Founder, so is He the Governor, Preserver, Teacher, Comforter, Sanctifier of the Church in all ages. In every individual instance of blessing both ministers and people, his is to manifest the gracious act, and in glorifying JESUS, to take of the LORD JESUS, and to make known to his disciples. And amidst all the diversities of gifts, and all differences of administrations, and all diversities of operations, *all these worketh that ONE and the self-same SPIRIT, dividing to every man severally as he will!*

Oh! blessed and eternal SPIRIT, do thou now, as thou didst then, manifest thy love to the Church of JESUS! Come, LORD, into the midst of thy Zion, though the builders have set a nought the chief corner stone! Raise up a faithful ministry, who, receiving their ordination from thee, may as faithfully dispense thy word to the people. Let the sweet ascension-gifts of our risen and exalted SAVIOR, again come down to enlighten our Churches, and let that precious Scripture be again fulfilled in our day and generation, where it is said, that *He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Pastors and Teachers, and all for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of CHRIST.* LORD, in mercy hear and do it; *defer not, O my GOD! till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of*

the SON of GOD, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of CHRIST.

CHAPTER 5

CONTENTS

We have here the awful Account of Ananias and Sapphira lying to the HOLY GHOST. Peter's Detection of them. The Apostles again imprisoned. The Angel of the LORD brings them out. They are brought before the Council, and after being beaten, are dismissed.

ACTS 5:1-10

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, (2) And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. (3) But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? (4) While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. (5) And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. (6) And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. (7) And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. (8) And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. (9) Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. (10) Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

e have here a most interesting record of two abominable hypocrites, whose crimes and punishment are circumstantially related, for the instruction and comfort of the Church in all ages. It is blessed to observe how GOD the HOLY GHOST watches over his Church, in causing such histories to be handed down to the people. Without such records, we might have been led to suppose, that in those happy days no characters of a contrary principle to the Apostles standard were to be found. But now we learn that the best of Churches, and the best of times, have their spots. In the ark, there was an *Ham*. Among the Apostles, a *Judas*, Under the first days of the HOLY GHOST'S ministry, the LORD permitted *Ananias* and *Sapphira* to mingle for a space with the faithful. But so far are these things from proving injurious to the Church, that they ultimately minister to her glory.

Reader, let us first contemplate the dreadful state of the human heart. Here were two persons most fully convinced, as far as head-knowledge could carry conviction, of the truths of GOD, professing a belief they never felt, and to preserve an opinion among the faithful, consenting, apparently, to give up the whole of their worldly goods for the benefit of the Church of CHRIST; and yet all the while had not the least real love to JESUS, or his people. And are such instances singular? Alas! the reverse. Perhaps there is not now upon earth a single congregation of professing Christians, of any number, but what hath some of the same description. And doth not the LORD[41] overrule such events to his glory, and his people's welfare? Yes! for it tends to make the LORD'S people jealous of themselves, when they discover such goats got into the sheepfold. It tends to humble the soul, under a sense of

common corruption. And it operates most blessedly to the LORD's glory, when a child of GOD is thereby led to discover, that all the difference between one and another is all of grace.

Let us next learn from this picture of human depravity, to admire the tender love of the LORD to the Church, in qualifying *Peter* to the detection of it. By the power which the HOLY GHOST gave him of discerning spirits, the iniquity was found out, and the Church cleansed from the impurity. And thus the LORD watches over his people for good in all ages.

I beg the Reader particularly to remark with me, that *Peter* charged this man with lying to the HOLY GHOST. But why is it so specially said that the lie was to the HOLY GHOST? I apprehend on this account. Because conversion-work is the personal operation of GOD the HOLY GHOST? So that the whole, and every part of this man's conduct, was directly leveled against the HOLY GHOST. He never had been converted. He never had felt the love of GOD, and of CHRIST, in his heart And therefore the deception was principally against GOD the SPIRIT. I pray the Reader, under this head, not to overlook how *Peter* speaks of the GODHEAD of the HOLY GHOST. In verse three, (Acts 5:3) he chargeth *Ananias* with lying to the HOLY GHOST. And in another, (Acts 5:4) he saith that lie was not unto men, but unto GOD. A plain proof, in *Peter's* view, that the HOLY GHOST is GOD.

One observation more meets us on this wonderful transaction, I mean the judgment of GOD, in instant death, both on the man and his wife. It must have been very awful; but it should seem that the LORD deemed it to be necessary. The honor of

GOD the SPIRIT. The honor of the Church of CHRIST now more eminently forming. The dreadful alarm it must have given hypocrites, to keep them from the Church. The fears it must have awakened in cautioning the foes of CHRIST to be very careful how they molested the Apostles. And the terror in all the future ages of the Church it might afford, to preserve the faithful from numberless instances of deception. These were certainly among the causes for which the speedy judgment of the LORD fell upon *Ananias* and *Sapphira*; and for which they stand forth, and will stand forth to the end of the world, monuments of the LORD's anger. Reader! let you and I, in the contemplation, learn to bless GOD for his *unspeakable gift!*

ACTS 5:11-16

And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things. (12) And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. (13) And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. (14) And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) (15) Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. (16) There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

It is easier to conceive than express the wonderful effect such events must have had on the minds of all that heard of them. Even the *Sanhedrim* for the moment seem to have been struck, so that, instead of apprehending *Peter* instantly, for the death of those liars, we hear that not only great fear came upon the Church, but upon all that heard of these things. And while multitudes were added to the LORD, not a

soul of hypocrisy for a season durst join themselves to the Apostles. And of such veneration were the Apostles in the esteem of the common people, that they looked to them for healing to all their sick, and those vexed with unclean spirits, and we are told that they were healed every one. Reader! ponder well the wonderful relation, and consider the blessed state of the Church in that season.

ACTS 5:17-42

Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, (18) And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. (19) But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, (20) Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. (21) And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. (22) But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told, (23) Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within. (24) Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow. (25) Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people. (26) Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned. (27) And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, (28) Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. (29) Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. (30) The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. (31) Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to

give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. (32) And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. (33) When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them. (34) Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; (35) And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. (36) For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to naught. (37) After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. (38) And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: (39) But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. (40) And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. (41) And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. (42) And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Let the Reader in this place remark again, what hath been often noticed before in this *Poor Man's Commentary*, the hardened state of the mind, which nothing short of sovereign grace can cure. And in persons of the characters here spoken of, for whom no provision is made in a grace-union with CHRIST, the thing is impossible, 2 Timothy 3:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12. And solemn as the subject is, yet we see in the history of the characters here shewn, the righteous judgment of GOD in the appointment. The everlasting hatred they manifested to CHRIST while upon earth, and now to his Apostles and followers after his departure, shutting up their

minds against all conviction most plainly testified the influence of Satan upon their hearts. The LORD leaving all such to their own perverse wills, can be no impeachment of his justice. The Apostle hath very fully shewn this, in his opening of the Epistle to the Romans. *As they did not* (saith the Apostle) *like to retain GOD in their knowledge, GOD gave them over to a reprobate mind,* Romans 1:28. This was only leaving a cause to produce its own natural effects. This was but suffering them to remain in that state of unbelief and ignorance, which by their own obduracy they have brought upon themselves, and of consequence will be found in at CHRIST'S second coming.

The opening the prison doors to the Apostles, and bringing them out, might have taught them, would they have listened to the loud voice accompanying the sovereign act, that the miracle was of GOD. And those Apostles not running away when brought out, as is the case with ordinary prisoners, carried a further conviction under whose protection they were. But all lose their effect with such hardened minds as are resolutely bent to resist all persuasion. Hence a judicial blindness follows. *Israel,* (that is, professing Israel, Romans 9:6-7.) *would name of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts, and they walked in their own counsels,* Psalm 81:11-12.

There is somewhat very sweet and striking in the angel's precept to the Apostles, *Go, stand and speak in the temple, to the people, all the words of this life.* Not, go, and hide yourself from the fury of your enemies. Not, go, and be idle, and give over what will expose you to persecution. But, go into the most public place, the temple, *stand* with firmness

and intrepidity, and *speak to the people*, the LORD'S people, the people whom JEHOVAH hath formed for himself, they shall shew forth his praise, Isaiah 43:21, all the words of this life, even eternal life, yea, CHRIST himself, who is life eternal: for he is the life and the light of men. By him, life and immortality is brought to light. For He it is, that by his incarnation, ministry, death, and resurrection, hath destroyed death, spiritual death, and eternal death. And by the life, both spiritual and eternal, which in his own life-giving, soul-renewing communication, as an Head to his members, he communicates to his whole body the Church, he quickens them from sin to salvation here in grace; and from death to life hereafter in glory. *Go stand and speak to the people all the words of this life!*

I pray the Reader to remark the firmness of the Apostles: But let him not fail to keep always in remembrance the cause. Oh! what strength cannot the LORD impart; yea, what strength will he not impart to his people, when his glory, and his Church's welfare, are concerned?

I must not stay to enter into particulars concerning the history here recorded, of the faithfulness of the Apostles, and the malice of their persecutors. Indeed the whole is so sweetly and plainly related, that it can need no comment. Let the Reader not fail to observe, how *Peter* harps in all his discourses, on Covenant love, while he so often calls upon those he addressed, to attend to what the LORD JEHOVAH hath done, in this grand concern, as *the GOD of our fathers*. And how blessedly he points to JESUS, as a risen, and an ascended Prince and SAVIOR, for *to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins*. So that JEHOVAH'S Covenant-love, and the

Redeemer's fulness of grace, finally leaves all without excuse, who neglect so great salvation!

The indignation of the Council, the advice of *Gamaliel*, the beating of the Apostles, and the command with which they suffered them to depart, no more to speak in the name of JESUS; these open large subjects for improvement: and I pray the LORD the SPIRIT to give both to the Writer and the Reader of this *Poor Man's Commentary*, grace so to gather sweet instruction from the perusal. But I must *not* enlarge.

One point more, I would call upon the Reader particularly to notice in this Chapter; namely, the Apostles departing from the presence of the Council, when stripes had been laid upon them, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of JESUS. And so far were they from being overawed by the threats of their enemies, or paying the least respect to their commands, that *daily in the temple, and from house to house, they ceased not to teach, and to preach JESUS CHRIST.*

Reader! can your mind furnish to itself any thing more lovely, than such a view of primitive faithfulness, in those first earnest laborers in the Church! They were nothing intimidated by their adversaries, nothing terrified or distressed. Both publicly in the temple, and in every private house wheresoever they came; not LORD'S days only, but every day; and not now and then, but unweariedly, their teaching, as well as their preaching, was all of JESUS CHRIST. The LORD JESUS was with them, both text and sermon; they found enough in him for endless discourse. Oh! that those glorious days would return, when CHRIST and CHRIST alone, JEHOVAH'S CHRIST, and

JEHOVAH'S chosen, may fill every pulpit, occupy every house, warm every heart, and flow from every tongue, in his Churches, and among his people! LORD! the SPIRIT, in mercy to thy Church, hasten the hour, when, *the Redeemer shall arise out of Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob! Come my beloved, (saith the Church,) and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices!*

REFLECTIONS

WHAT an awful delusion, must that delusion of the mind be, which like *Anmias* and *Sapphira*, is trifling with GOD? What an horrible state to be *feeding on ashes, when a deceived heart hath turned the sinner aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, is there not a lie in my right hand?*

Blessed LORD! let my soul be relieve, and comforted, when turning from the view of the *Ananias's* and *Sapphira's* of the present generation, I behold the zeal and honesty, the faithfulness and diligence of thy servants the Apostles in their day, holding forth the word of this life. Endued with the SPIRIT from on high, let me admire the burning fervor of *Peter's* mind, in punishing by divine authority, the daring lie of such awful characters, committed against GOD the HOLY GHOST. And cause me, thou dear LORD, to see how the LORD honors them, whose delight it is to honor the LORD. Oh! for such a portion of the same spirit, as actuated the mind of *Peter*, to be poured out on all the faithful ministers of the sanctuary, that they may teach and preach JESUS CHRIST, *and be instant in*

season, and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine.

And LORD, to all the persecutions and malice of their enemies, may an holy indifferency manifest, that they are borne up and supported by thee; that though *troubled on every side, yet not distressed; or if perplexed, yet never in despair*; that they may always *bear about the dying of the LORD JESUS; that the life also of JESUS may be made manifest in their body.* And do thou LORD to all the prison frames, and bondage exercises of thy Church and people, give them to see the Angel of the Covenant always at hand to bring them out. Yea, let every eye of thy redeemed family be directed by GOD the SPIRIT, to be looking to Him, who is *exalted as a Prince and Savior, to give repentance to his Israel, and remission of sins.* Precious JESUS! send down all thine ascension-gifts, and bless thine whole Church with the manifestation of thyself, *until CHRIST be formed in every heart the hope of glory.*

CHAPTER 6

CONTENTS

The Church of CHRIST requiring it, Deacons are chosen. Stephen being elected, and speaking by the SPIRIT, is opposed by many.

ACTS 6:1

And in those days, when the number of the disciples were multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

As the last chapter opened with an account of the corruption which had crept into the Church, in the awful instance of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, so here again we enter upon this chapter, with the relation of other taints of our Adam-nature transgression, in the murmuring and dissatisfaction breaking out in the Church. Reader! it will be our mercy to gather, under the HOLY GHOST'S teaching, improvement from it, in learning, that the purest moment of the Church, in this time-state of her being, (for such, surely, this era was,) is not free from sin. And, oh! how blessedly do such convictions preach CHRIST, Yes! thou dear LORD! well is it for thy people, that thy name is *the LORD our righteousness!* Jeremiah 23:6; Isaiah 14:24-25; 1 Corinthians 1:30-31.

It should seem from the account here given, that so numerous was the Church of the LORD now become, that the alms collected from the more affluent of the people, were not enough for the daily supply of the more needy. And it is more than probable, from the infirmities of a poor fallen nature, partiality might have been shewn in the distribution. Be this as it may, there arose a murmuring by the Grecians, (by which, I suppose, is meant the Jews of *Greece*, to distinguish them from those of *Judaea*,) on this account, which no doubt much disturbed the harmony of the Church. Reader! do not overlook the merciful designs of the Great Head of his Church, in disposing the inequalities of life in the outward circumstances of it. I do not doubt, but that the LORD made much good spring out of this seeming evil, among CHRIST'S redeemed ones, who found themselves neglected. For if the unkindness of men, even of brethren, inclines the heart to look more to the LORD and less to man, the very sorrow is

made sweet. JESUS would not, for he needed not, have made his Church poor, had not poverty best suited her present time-state of being. Sweet is that scripture, pray turn to it, for it suits the Church of JESUS in all ages; *I will also leave in the midst of thee, an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD*, Zephaniah 3:12. Depend upon it, that it is our affliction and poverty, both in spirituals and temporals, which minister most advantageously to keep the heart near JESUS. For amidst all the love we seem, to have to Him, if at any time we get out of this conscious need of JESUS, we find the same risings of pride as Israel of old, and say as she did, *we are lords, we will come no more unto thee*, Jeremiah 2:31.

ACTS 6:2-4

Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. (3) Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. (4) But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

The twelve Apostles, including *Matthias*, are here engaged in making suitable arrangements for the correcting of the present, and any future errors which might arise in the Church. And, from this authority it should seem, first sprung that order, which all well regulated societies in the faith have since observed, in the appointment of subordinate offices to the ministry in the Church. *Moses*, at the suggestion of *Jethro*, adopted somewhat of the same plan in his days, Exodus 18:14, &c. How truly Apostolic was this advice? How affectionately, as to brethren, was it delivered? And what a

lovely view doth it afford of CHRIST'S Church, in this blessed age of the Apostles? *We, (said they,) will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.* As if, (and which in one sense is literally the case,) their very persons, as well as their time and labors, were not their own. For though Apostles, their eminency consisted not in rank, but in usefulness. JESUS their LORD, while loving their persons, loved their office no further than as it ministered to his glory, and the feeding his sheep, John 21:15-17. *Peter, to whom CHRIST gave this charge (and thrice repeating it, as if to intimate the importance of it,) in his last exercises of his Apostleship, dwelt upon it very sweetly; The elders which are among you, (said he,) I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of CHRIST, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed; feed the flock of GOD which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away,* 1 Peter 5:1-4.

ACTS 6:5-7

And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: (6) Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. (7) And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Reader! behold here again, what a lovely representation is made of the Church! As in the preceding verses we stood to admire the LORD'S Apostles in the department of their office,

let us pause a moment now to contemplate the beautiful order of the people. The saying of the Apostles, we are told, *pleased the whole multitude*. And if we call to mind, how GOD the HOLY GHOST all along, from the day of *Pentecost*, had been calling CHRIST'S redeemed ones from the darkness of nature to the light of grace; we shall find, that the Church was indeed a multitude little short of ten thousand: (see Acts 1:15; Acts 2:41; Acts 4:4; Acts 5:14,) and yet all were pleased with the Apostles' proposal. What a delightful view it affords of the Church of JESUS! And, though it is not said, yet we may reasonably conclude, such was the love of the whole Church to the persons and labors of the Apostles, that while they were giving themselves to prayer, as well as the ministry of the word, the people were not unfrequently at prayer for them. *Paul*, in his days, was so sensible of the blessedness of being borne by the arms of the Church, in the prayers of the people before the mercy-seat, that he desired the brethren to pray for him, and his fellow labourers, 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Hebrews 13:18. And it must be in all ages of the Church a blessed thing, and more especially in times like the present, when the people lodge much prayer, and daily add to the stock before the Great Head of his Church, that the labors of his poor servants be commissioned and owned by the LORD. It hath been said, and I see no ground to doubt the truth of it, that many a minister of CHRIST, hath found the blessed effects of his peoples' prayers, in the grace and abilities he hath at certain seasons received from the LORD. Certain it is, that if a Church is looking for blessings from the LORD, in the ministry of his word; it would be well to be looking at the same time, that the LORD would bless the messenger which brings them; that both minister

and people may be blessed of the LORD, and send up their thanksgivings together.

The seven men here chosen by the Church, if we may judge by their names, were all taken from the Jews of Greece, for there is not one Hebrew name among them. And it may serve to shew, how much the whole body of the people were earnest, that the murmuring which arose from that quarter should have a full redress, since those who were appointed to this part of government, were all taken from their own people. Reader do not fail to observe, how the stratagems of Satan were defeated by his own weapons, since the very plan he devised to separate believers, became the means of uniting them more closely together, in forming a body of holy men, and full of the HOLY GHOST, to listen to the sorrows and enquire into the wants of the LORD'S family, that they might be softened and relieved.

I do not think it necessary to detain the Reader, with dwelling on the names and characters of the seven men here chosen. Indeed, excepting the first of them, *Stephen*, (and of him I shall have occasion to speak somewhat particularly, in the close of this and the following chapter,) the HOLY GHOST hath recorded no more than their names. So that, where the LORD is silent, it should seem to be our wisdom to be silent, also. But I beg the Reader to notice, the method the church was pleased to adopt, for their being ordained to their office, in setting them before the Apostles, and after prayer, the Apostles laying their hands on them. And let it not be overlooked, that when the Apostles directed the Church to look out seven men from among them, they were supposed to be brethren; that is, persons regenerated by the HOLY

GHOST; *holy brethren*, as they are elsewhere called *partakers of the heavenly calling*, Hebrews 3:1. In those days, none would have been chosen into the humblest office of the ministry, who was not himself a partaker of grace, and savingly called by the HOLY GHOST. For how should a dead sinner minister in the life-giving word and doctrine? Neither can any man have a feeling affection for the Church of CHRIST'S body, as a body, who hath never himself by regeneration, *tasted that the LORD is gracious*, 1 Peter 2:1-5. These men, therefore, were themselves brethren, and by regeneration, *made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*, 2 Peter 1:4. And yet we see, that while without this work of GOD the SPIRIT upon their souls, they would not have been qualified for the office the Apostles had directed; they were not permitted to enter upon it without prayer, and the laying on of the Apostles' hands. See Numbers 27:18 to the end. Oh! that the entrance into any, and every department of CHRIST'S sheepfold, was never made but by the door, CHRIST himself, and by the porter, which is GOD the SPIRIT by regeneration. Very awful is that scripture, in every instance, where this is not the case, John 10:1-3.

What a short, but blessed account, this passage closeth with; of the increase of the word; the multiplying the number of true believers; and what is more extraordinary, the great company of the Jewish priests, (for there were no other in those days in *Jerusalem*,) which joined the faithful. But what cannot the LORD the SPIRIT accomplish? There is a provision in the covenant which never fails, Psalm 110:3; John 6:37; John 17:2. Reader! it is by the virtue and efficacy of this covenant,

ordered in all things, and sure; faithful ministers of the LORD JESUS, as well as the Apostles in those early ages of the Church, labor in the word and doctrine; and like the great father of the faithful, against hope believe in hope, Romans 4:18.

ACTS 6:8-15

And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. (9) Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. (10) And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. (11) Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. (12) And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council, (13) And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: (14) For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. (15) And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

We here enter upon the interesting history of *Stephen*, the first of the seven brethren, in the government of the Church under the Apostles, and the first martyr in the Church of CHRIST, after the descent of the HOLY GHOST at *Pentecost*. It is evident, that *Stephen* preached, as well as did *wonders and miracles among the people*; for we read, that those who opposed him, *were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit, with which he spake*. But the most important point for us to consider is, what blasphemy it was, with which these foes to CHRIST, and to his people, charged him? I conceive this to be no unimportant point, For if, as I am inclined to

believe, *Stephen* died a martyr to the GODHEAD of the LORD JESUS, it will throw a light upon this part of the Church's history, and serve to teach us, that this glorious truth, which is the very foundation of our holy faith, was then, as in modern times it hath since been, what infidelity most revolts at.

If the Reader will gather into one point of view, the several charges before the council brought against *Stephen*, and consider them a little attentively, he will perceive that the whole together were *four* in number. *First*, Blasphemous words against *Moses*, *Secondly*, Against GOD. *Thirdly*, Blasphemous words against this holy place, meaning most probably, the temple; or, perhaps, the city of *Jerusalem*, called the holy city in which the temple stood, Matthew 27:53. And, *fourthly*, Against the law. Now, by analyzing these several and distinct charges, and examining them, one by one, under their respective heads, we shall be enabled to form a clear apprehension of the ground upon which the council acted, when stoning *Stephen*, according to the Jewish law, for the supposed blasphemy.

And, *first*, concerning the blasphemous words against *Moses*. It is, indeed, an extraordinary, and to this time an unheard of accusation, to talk of blasphemy against a man. For nothing can be called blasphemy, except it hath the LORD for its object. Blasphemy, is peculiarly, and specially, a sin against Him. But here was the drift of their resentment. *Stephen* had said, that the LORD JESUS would change the customs, that is, the rites, which *Moses* had delivered to the people. Indeed, the LORD had done it. Those rites were only shadowy representations, and CHRIST himself was the substance ; and

as such, the whole of *Moses's* institutions, having accomplished the end for which they were originally appointed, did of themselves cease. But, as this doctrine implied, that *Moses* was the servant of CHRIST, and consequently GOD; He who was with the angel, (as he told them in the following chapter,) when speaking *to Moses* from the bush; (Acts 7:38) the conclusion became undeniable, that CHRIST was GOD; and this they deemed blasphemy. I pray the Reader to turn to Hebrews 3:5-6.

The *second* charge of blasphemy against GOD, could have been no other than the ascribing divine honors to the LORD JESUS CHRIST. And if the Reader will in this place, by way of ascertaining more, clearly the matter of fact, anticipate in some measure *Stephen's* history, by turning to the close of it, towards the end of the next chapter, (Acts 7:56-58) he will immediately perceive, by what this faithful servant of the LORD then said, how firm his mind must have been in the belief of CHRIST'S GODHEAD. We there find him exclaiming in a rapture of holy joy, and regardless of all around him, that he saw the LORD JESUS in person, as the *Shechinah* in the Old Testament, which manifested the presence of the LORD, used to appear; and nothing could be more decisive in proof, *that Stephen* considered CHRIST as GOD. Indeed his enemies themselves so interpreted *Stephen's* words, and as such, unable to suppress their indignation, they dragged him instantly from before the council, and stoned him with stones till he died. Nothing, surely, can be more full in point, that *Stephen* died a martyr to the profession of the GODHEAD of CHRIST. See Leviticus 14:6; Leviticus 14:23; 1 Kings 21:13; Deuteronomy 17:2-7.

For the *third* of those charges against *Stephen*, namely, blasphemous words in relation to the temple, or the city, we may consider this as in some degree included in the former, being by a necessary consequence implicated in it. For, if the LORD JESUS would destroy the temple, it implied the divinity of his nature in the deed. Indeed CHRIST had predicted the destruction of it, Matthew 24:1-2. But then it was for rejecting him, Luke 19:44. And, therefore, here also was an indirect acknowledgment of *Stephens* faith in the GODHEAD of the LORD JESUS.. *Stephen*, as a Jew, would have been equally shocked, as those carnal Jews were, at the idea of any one destroying their beloved city and temple. But CHRIST as GOD, in the faith of *Stephen*, not only reconciled that, and every other event which the LORD appointed, but gave him an holy joy, in contemplating the sovereignty of JESUS.

And, *lastly*, for the *fourth* of those charges; blasphemous words against the law; the very introduction of the Gospel, in superseding the law, became blasphemy in the extreme in the eyes of a Jew. And as none but He who gave the law could have authority to do away the law, by so much, while *Stephen* asserted that CHRIST would change the customs, which Moses delivered; plainly he asserted also, that CHRIST was GOD. So that each, and every one of those charges, to which they annexed the crime of blasphemy, most evidently prove their views of the faith of *Stephen*. He stood forth a firm champion for the GODHEAD of CHRIST; and it was for this supposed blasphemy, for which he was stoned. Indeed, in the very moment of his death, he committed his soul into the hands of the LORD JESUS as GOD. LORD JESUS! (said he,) *receive my spirit?* Acts 7:59.

I stay not to notice, (though highly meriting our notice, in respect to the LORD's tender regard to his faithful servant,) what is said in the close of this chapter, of the bright countenance of *Stephen*, like an angel, which all in the council, it is said, beheld. I cannot speak upon it with any decision. As such, I rather decline any observations, than to run the hazard of speaking presumptuously. But, I would just humbly ask, might it not have been similar to the case of *Moses*, when in the Mount, Exodus 34:29-30. And, if so, were not both instances, *Moses* and *Stephen*, from the same LORD JESUS? But, as GOD the HOLY GHOST hath not been pleased to record any thing further than the fact itself, it becomes us not to enquire. But of one point we are taught, and in which we cannot err. *Stephen* was here engaged in his LORD's cause; and for the testimony of JESUS, he was brought before the council. Hence CHRIST'S promise, Luke 21:12-15. Very blessed is it, therefore, to discover, as in the case of *Stephen*, that a suited grace is always dispensed, as the circumstances of the LORD's tried ones shall require. *As thy day is, thy strength shall be.* Reader! let you and I take occasion from this view of *Stephen*, to calculate upon it for every hour of need, and especially like his, for the hour of death. Oh! for the LORD in that season to be eminently present, as he assuredly will, with all his redeemed. LORD! *lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon my soul!* that *when I awake up, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness, and behold thy face in righteousness!*

REFLECTIONS

READER! ponder well even in this golden age of the Church, how tarnished with abuse the LORD's mercies were, when murmurings arose from partial ministrations of the good things of GOD's providences. Behold from it, my soul, and learn what a mass of corruption, the unrenewed part of our fallen nature is, and what a handle Satan makes of it to interrupt the peace of the Church! But learn also, how the LORD the SPIRIT takes occasion therefrom, to raise improvements for his people. The appointment of inferior officers in the Church of CHRIST, took its rise from hence. And in how many instances, have they since that time, proved a blessing. But what a sweet relief ought such views of the imperfection of the best of Churches bring to the mind, in the recollection, that amidst all the errors of men, the LORD's truth is the same; and, however brethren, through the infirmity of a fallen nature, may neglect one another; JESUS never overlooks, or neglects his people. Precious LORD JESUS! let me never lose sight of this.

Happy and prosperous is that Church of CHRIST, where men of good report, and full of the HOLY GHOST, minister in her government, and are helpful to the LORD's family. And blessed must be those ordinances, where faithful pastors, like the Apostles, give themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. Not serving tables, and mingling with the carnal, and learning their works; neither as being lords over GOD's heritage; but being ensamples to the flock, in word, in conversation, in faith, in charity.

Oh! for the faith of *Stephen*, to be valiant for the truth, amidst all the libertines of the present day. JESUS will own and bless all such. Their witness is in heaven, and their record on high.

And, though a brightness like that of *Stephen*, may not, because it is needed not, shine upon their countenances, to the view of their foes; yet, the LORD will cause their eyes to be so directed to Him in faith, that their souls will be enlightened, and their faces shall not be ashamed.

CHAPTER 7

CONTENTS

The History of Stephen is continued. He preacheth before the Council; is interrupted in the Midst of his Discourse by his Enemies; dragged forth from before the Council, and stoned.

ACTS 7:1

Then said the high priest, Are these things so?

The chapter opens with the demand of the high priest, that *Stephen* should answer to the charges brought against him; or rather, he takes the matter as already granted, and saith, *are these things so?* Not in the least overawed by the wonderful sight, which he, and all that sat in the council saw, (as related in the foregoing chapter,) in the glory like an angel on *Stephen's* countenance; the faithful servant of the LORD, was, in the mind of this time-serving high priest, already condemned. He only waited to hear somewhat, which might, with a little more plausibility, call forth his sentence. Under these impressions, he cried out, as with an holy indignation, *are these things so?*

ACTS 7:2-16

And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in

Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, (3) And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee. (4) Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Haran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. (5) And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child. (6) And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years. (7) And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place. (8) And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs. (9) And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, (10) And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. (11) Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance. (12) But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. (13) And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh. (14) Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. (15) So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, (16) And were carried over into Shechem, and laid in the sepulcher that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem.

We have reason to bless GOD the HOLY GHOST, not only for the occasion which gave rise to this precious discourse of *Stephen*, but for causing it to be recorded. For, although we have the whole history before, in the word of GOD; *yet* the manner in which *Stephen*, under the full impressions of the HOLY GHOST, (see Acts 6:5 and Acts 7:55) delivered this sermon, hath thrown a light upon some parts of it, in a most

blessed and interesting manner, and which I hope the LORD will enable us to perceive, as we prosecute the subject.

Stephen begins in a respectful manner, such as became him. For, although the present *Sanhedrim* was composed of very different characters from those holy men of old, which, at the first institution of the order were appointed and consecrated of GOD; (compare Numbers 11:16-17 with Acts 4:5-7, see also the Commentary on those verses) yet the order was the same, being of the LORD'S appointment. And this holds good in all ages, and upon all occasions, Romans 13:1. I admire the expression *Stephen* useth, when he calleth the LORD, *the GOD of glory*. And I would humbly ask, whether *Stephen* did not mean the same glorious Person as appeared to *Moses* in the bush, and which he takes notice of in his discourse, (Acts 7:30) For the appearing to *Abraham* at the time *Stephen* speaks of, and the appearing to *Moses* in the after age of the Church, at the bush, were both on the same covenant concern; and in both, the LORD called himself by the same name, Genesis 15:18; Exodus 3:6. And who this glorious person was, cannot be far to learn. *Stephen* himself hath explained, (Acts 7:38) He calls him the *angel which spake to Moses in the mount*. Now that angel which spake to *Moses* in the mount, expressly called himself JEHOVAH. See Exodus 3:6. And CHRIST is both the covenant himself, and the angel or messenger of the covenant, Isaiah 42:6; Malachi 3:1. And had this not been the case, in both these transactions, with *Abraham* and *Moses*, as well as upon numberless other occasions, when this angel is said by *Stephen*, (Acts 7:38) to have spake not only to *Moses*, but *to our fathers*, how could the LORD JESUS tell the Jews, as he did tell them, that *they had*

never heard the FATHER'S voice at any time, nor seen his shape? John 5:37. It appears to me I confess, that this decision of the LORD JESUS becomes an unanswerable argument, (in addition to the many other collateral testimonies we have,) that both the manifestations and words, which were made to the old Church before the incarnation of CHRIST, were by Him, who in the fulness of time, was to openly tabernacle, in substance of our flesh, among his people, and intended as so many intimations, to keep alive the expectation of that glorious event, in the minds of the LORD's people.

Stephen having thus opened his subject at that part, where alone it could be opened, beginning with *the GOD of glory*; he takes up the history of the Church at the revelation of the covenant with *Abraham*, and refers his hearers to the well-known circumstances of the opening of that Covenant-transaction, in the call of *Abraham*. I need not follow *Stephen* through the whole of what he hath rehearsed within the compass of those few verses. The whole particulars are all upon record in the life of the patriarch. But I would rather call upon my Reader to remark with me, the several very interesting things *Stephen* hath stated, in respect to *Abraham*; and which, more or less, belong to all *Abraham's seed, which are also heirs according to the promise*, Galatians 3:29.

The LORD called *Abraham* from his father's house, and from his kindred. The LORD, though promising to give the land, to which he called him for an inheritance to him, and to his seed after him; yet for a long space gave him no possession there, no not a foot's breadth. The LORD, though promising that his

seed should be as the stars of the heaven for multitude, yet, for many a year, suffered him to go childless, Genesis 15:1-6. And even when *Ishmael* was born, the LORD taught him, that this son of the bondwoman, was not the heir, in whom the promise was to be vested, and from whose seed after the flesh the promised seed should come, Genesis 17:18-21.

Pause, Reader, and contemplate the subject spiritually as it is with all the LORD's people; and then say, are not *Abraham's* children, after the faith, more or less, exercised the same? The call of *Abraham* was a pattern how the LORD, in after ages, would call the spiritual offspring of his dear SON, Isaiah 44:3-5. They are also called, from their father's house, and from their kindred, in the Adam-nature of a fallen state; and are commanded to forget their own people, and their father's house, when sovereign grace hath opened their eyes to a sense of sin, and a desire of salvation, Psalm 45:10. And as *Abraham*, at the call of GOD, *went out not knowing whither he went*: so *Abraham's* seed are exercised the same way. By faith like him they are going forth in the strength of CHRIST, looking for *a city which hath foundations whose builder and Maker is GOD*, Hebrews 11:8-10. And how sweet are discovered, in the after fruits of faith, the many exercises of the LORD's tried ones? There can be no real trust in the LORD without faith, Hebrews 11:6. Untried faith is in reality no faith. While the LORD acts only as a *promising* GOD; our knowledge of Him, and our dependance upon Him, can only be by faith. But when this promising GOD becomes a *performing* GOD, faith then is lost in enjoyment. So that in fact, during the time of waiting, is the only time for the exercise of this precious gift of a Covenant GOD in CHRIST. And, Reader! let me detain you

one moment longer to observe, that it is on this account faith is so highly spoken of by GOD the HOLY GHOST, in his blessed word. We read of the *precious blood of CHRIST*, 1 Peter 1:19. Of the *exceeding great and precious promises*, 2 Peter 1:4. And with these (wonderful to tell) is named, *precious faith also, more precious than gold*, 1 Peter 1:7. And what can be more precious, as a fruit, and effect, of the LORD'S grace in the heart of his redeemed, than when a child of GOD, like *Abraham*, the great father of the faithful, *against hope* is enabled to *believe in hope*, Romans 4:8. Oh! for grace to be so wholly emptied of self, as to be always living *upon CHRIST*, walking *with CHRIST*, and trusting in *CHRIST*! Sweet faith! LORD *increase our faith!* See 1 Peter 1:7 and Commentary.

In prosecuting *Stephen's* sermon, I would beg the Reader to observe with me, how this faithful servant of the LORD takes notice of the LORD'S grace, in giving *Abraham* the outlines of the Covenant, which was to run on so many hundred years before the promised seed should come, to whom the promise was made, and in whom the whole was to be fulfilled. There is somewhat very blessed in this; and merits our concern. *Abraham* himself was not to live to see the accomplishment. Neither *Isaac*, nor *Jacob*, the heirs with him of the promise. Neither the patriarchs which followed. But what of that? Though so long an interval was to take place, the thing was the same: and the promise itself certain and sure. The Covenant of circumcision was appointed as an outward sign, or seal, to carry on the assurance of it from father to son. Hence, with this scriptural rite, the Patriarchs handed down in successive generations, this great promise of GOD, as more precious, yea, infinitely more precious, as the blessed Charter

of grace, than rich men transmit to their heirs the titles of their estates, and all their perishing treasures.

And these things induced in the hearts of the Patriarchs, through divine teaching, an holy familiarity and acquaintance with the person, work, and glory of CHRIST the promised seed. *Abraham saw the day of CHRIST afar off, rejoiced, and was glad*, John 8:56. *Isaac* lived and died, in the full assurance, not only of his own personal interest in the same, but that *in him the promised seed should be called*: and by faith, blessed *Jacob and Esau, concerning things to come*, Hebrews 11:18-20. (See Commentary there.) And no less *Jacob, when He was a dying, by faith*, in the same glorious expectation, *blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff*, Hebrews 11:21. In short, so did all the fathers in succession. They all lived, and they all died, as they had lived, *in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them*. They cherished the blessed hope; carried it about with them wherever they went, as in their arms, and wore it close to their heart. And thus, *the father to the children made known the LORD'S truth!* Isaiah 38:19. See also Genesis 48:21; 1. 24, 25?????.

Reader! do not dismiss this part of *Stephen's* sermon, in the view of the patriarchs, and their faith in CHRIST, without first enquiring whether you are among the *followers of them, who now through faith and patience inherit the promises*. Remember, that the promise to which these holy men of old looked, and which they died in the full assurance of, hath been for many hundred years since fulfilled, in the person and work of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. And now in the possession of

those blessed truths, which their faith had in view, but which we have seen accomplished; our faith is now exercised, in looking forward to the sure expectation of all these blessings, resulting from the whole, in grace here, and glory hereafter. Reader! it is precious faith, when *we rejoice in hope of the glory of GOD*, Romans 5:2.

I pass over the several records of the Patriarchs, in what *Stephen* hath just glanced at in those verses, of their going down into Egypt. For, although the events themselves are highly interesting, and would well recompense a long and close attention to them; yet they would far exceed the limits I am constrained to observe, in this *Poor Man's Commentary*.

ACTS 7:17-29

But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, (18) Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. (19) The same dealt subtlety with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. (20) In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months: (21) And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son. (22) And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. (23) And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. (24) And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: (25) For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not. (26) And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? (27) But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? (28) Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the

Egyptian yesterday? (29) Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons.

The time of the promise here alluded to, doth not mean the coming of the promised seed; for this was yet far remote: but the promise, which was to take place, at the end of *the four hundred years*; when the LORD would deliver his people out of the afflictions of *Egypt*, and judge that nation (Acts 7:6-7). And how exact the LORD was to his promise, the HOLY GHOST hath caused it to be recorded, with peculiar marks of distinction; and enjoined the perpetual remembrance of it in his Church, Exodus 12:41-42. If the Reader finds some little difficulty to reconcile the two different dates of years spoken of on this occasion; that difficulty will cease, by recollecting that the commencement of reckoning, doth not begin at the oppressions of *Egypt* over *Israel*, for those cruelties were not exercised until after the death of *Joseph*. And indeed, the whole sojourning of Israel in Egypt, could not have been more than two hundred and forty years, See Genesis 25:26; Genesis 47:9; Genesis 50:26. But when, as in this Chapter, and at the promise first given, Genesis 15:13; Genesis 15:16, we are to reckon *four hundred years*; the account of reckoning begins after the birth of *Isaac*. And for the thirty years the account is taken from *Abraham's* first sojourning in Egypt, Genesis 12:10 with Exodus 12:40.

The deliverance of *Israel* from *Egypt*, beside the history as a matter of fact, and beside the personal mercy of the redemption, to the children of GOD *then*; was a sweet type of the LORD's Israel *now*, and in all ages of the Church; being brought out of the Egypt of sin, by the Person, work, and glory, of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. In all, and every instance of

the Church's bondage, GOD in Covenant speaks over again the same words, as he graciously said to *Abraham: The nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said GOD. They shall come forth, and serve me!* What a reviving thought to bondage souls!

If I detain the Reader for a moment in this place, it shall only be to remark, what a beautiful type of the LORD JESUS *Moses* was, in numberless instances, in relation to his Church and people. The HOLY GHOST, by his servant *Paul*, in his Epistle to the Hebrews; Hebrews 3 and Hebrews 11, hath thrown great light upon this Scripture history, concerning *Moses* and the Church; and especially, in relation to his being in many points, a type as well as a servant of his Almighty LORD and SAVIOR.

One feature, I particularly beg to notice to the Reader, concerning this man, which to me I confess is striking. *Stephen* saith, in his account of him that *he supposed his brethren would have understood, how that GOD by his hand would deliver them.* Now, we find no notice taken of this apprehension in the mind of *Moses*, in the history which we have of him at large in *Exodus*. Nay, on the contrary, when in the after days of *Moses's* life, and when at the bush, the LORD called him to this service, we find a strong reluctancy on the part of *Moses*, to go upon so arduous an undertaking. It was very gracious, therefore, in GOD the HOLY GHOST, to put it into the heart and mouth of *Stephen*, to tell the Church this concerning *Moses*; for it. opens a very interesting train of thoughts in the mind, and which under divine teaching, cannot fail of becoming highly profitable. In the relation we have of *Moses's* history, Exodus 2:10-11, the chasm, from *Moses* being brought from the time of nursing by *Pharaoh's*

daughter, to his being grown, is not filled in with any date; and we are left to form our own conjectures, how long it might have been from his being brought to *Pharaoh's* daughter, to the time that it came into his heart to visit his brethren. But the LORD the SPIRIT was pleased to think it important, that the Church should know; and therefore by *Stephen* we are told, that he was forty years old, when this event took place. Here then evidently we behold, the first impulse breaking out in the mind of *Moses* under the LORD, of his relationship to *Israel*, and that Israel in CHRIST, And I pray the Reader yet further to remark, the very words which GOD the HOLY GHOST useth, for they are striking: *it came into his heart, to visit his brethren*. How? I would humbly ask, but by the SPIRIT of the LORD. He was now in the Court of *Pharaoh*. An adopted son of the King's daughter. But *Moses*, though all this while, for forty years, insensible as it should seem, to the afflictions of his people; yet *could not but know himself by the marks of circumcision in his flesh* of the seed of *Abraham*. These things were smothered, hid away, from the observation, or knowledge even of those in the Court of *Pharaoh*, who knew his origin; yea, probably *Moses* would have wished while unawakened by grace, to have forgotten them himself. But, when the LORD put it in his heart, he felt the full tide of *Israel's* stream, in love to return; and from the same Almighty teaching drew conclusions, that the GOD of *Abraham*, which prompted him to deliver his oppressed brethren, must have taught them also! Reader! what a train of the most precious thoughts arise from hence, in proof of grace-union in CHRIST, and sometimes breaking out in a way perfectly undescribable, in confirmation of it, even before any open work is wrought in the soul by regeneration, as in the

instance of *Moses*, to make us sensible whose we are, and to whom we belong! Reader! Is it not sweet to you? It is to me indeed!

ACTS 7:30-50

And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. (31) When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, (32) Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold. (33) Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground. (34) I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt. (35) This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. (36) He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years. (37) This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. (38) This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: (39) To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, (40) Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. (41) And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. (42) Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? (43) Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon. (44) Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness

in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. (45) Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Joshua into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; (46) Who found favor before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. (47) But Solomon built him a house. (48) Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, (49) Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? (50) Hath not my hand made all these things?

Reader! pause to remark, a *second forty years* in the life of *Moses* had run out, before those visions of GOD began, which took place at the bush. What a wonder-working GOD is Israel's GOD, in relation to his dealings with his people? We find, that at all ages, at all occasions, and in all departments of life, the manifestations of his love, in the first calls of his grace, have been, and still are, made known. No time, no place, nor circumstances, can preclude their operation. The charter of grace runs in very certain terms: *All that the FATHER giveth me shall come to me*, John 6:37. *In that day that the great trumpet shall be blown, they shall come which were ready to perish*, Isaiah 27:13.

I have already, in the opening of this Chapter, made it appear very plain, that it was the SON of GOD which spake *to Moses* from the bush: (see verses 2—16. and the Comment upon the passage:) but in this place I would beg to add a short observation further. The inspired writer of the book of *Exodus*, (Exodus 3:4) saith, that GOD *called unto him out of the midst of the bush*. And here *Stephen* confirms the same, when he saith, that the words spoken were in a Covenant manifestation, as *the GOD of Abraham, and the GOD of Isaac*,

and the GOD of Jacob. So that it was not simply GOD, but GOD in Covenant; not only the glory of GOD in the person of CHRIST, but the glory of GOD'S grace in him, John 1:18. And I would not have the Reader overlook, or forget, that this manifestation had such a strong and lasting impression on the mind of *Moses*, that when he came to die, and as he blessed the tribes of Israel before his death, he dwelt with more affection upon this discovery of Covenant-love to his soul at the bush, than upon any other circumstance in his whole eventful life. As he pronounced his dying benediction, (and which was partly prophetic,) upon the tribe of *Joseph*, the blessings he prayed for were all founded *in the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush*: Deuteronomy 33:16, meaning GOD in flesh; CHRIST sealing all the blessings of the Covenant. *Moses*, by faith, beheld the SON of GOD then in our nature, as in a bush not consumed, because GOD dwelt in it: and finishing in that nature the whole purposes of redemption. Reader! *first* impressions of GOD'S revelations in CHRIST are precious things. A child of GOD will think of them with holy joy, in the *last* hours of his dwelling in a body of flesh. And not unfrequently will they arise warm in the soul, when all the powers of nature are growing cold in approaching death.

One word more on this passage. When the LORD speaks of having seen the affliction of his people in *Egypt*, having heard their groanings, knew their sorrows, and was come down to deliver them; in the commission given to *Moses*, we must look to an infinitely greater than *Moses*, and behold the LORD JESUS CHRIST. It is JESUS which is come down to deliver his people, from more than the Egyptian state of bondage, even from the captivity of sin and hell, and everlasting destruction. And the

LORD'S people are indeed his people, by every tye which can make them so; from the everlasting betrothing of the Church, through all the time-state of the present existence, and leading into the eternity, which is to follow.

I admire the grace of the LORD, in repeating the assurance, of having perfect knowledge of his peoples' sorrows. *I have seen; I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt.* Reader! think how since that period, the LORD hath given his Church a more palpable conviction, of the interest he takes in all that concerns his redeemed; in not only knowing, and seeing their afflictions, but by a fellow-feeling, taking part with them in all that belongs to them. *Whoso toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye,* Zechariah 2:8. *In all their affliction, he is afflicted,* Isaiah 63:9; Hebrews 5:1-2.

And there is a world of tenderness in the expression, *my people*. For it not only implies a peculiarity, whereby they differ from all the world beside; but a property, a right, which in every point, distinguishes them from every other nation under heaven. It is indeed a name, to signify the LORD'S right in them, and their right in all that belongs to the LORD, by virtue of their relationship, and a oneness of nature in him. Sweetly sung the Church to this union, when she said, *I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.* Song of Solomon 6:3.

I forbear to enlarge on the several other parts which *Stephen* brings forward, in reciting the outlines of the history of the Church. Indeed it cannot be necessary, as the word of God hath the whole very largely set forth, in its proper place. And the subject is too plain to need a comment. If the Reader wishes any further scriptural testimony, in confirmation, I

would recommend him, to consult some, or all, of the following scriptures, Exodus 19:3; Exodus 19:9-10; Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 5:2-4; Exodus 33:11; Psalm 83:18; Exodus 24:18; 1 Kings 8:27 Isaiah 66:2-13.

ACTS 7:51-60

Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. (52) Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: (53) Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. (54) When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. (55) But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, (56) And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. (57) Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, (58) And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. (59) And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. (60) And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

I beg the Reader to be very particular, in observing the charge which *Stephen* brings, of his opponents' resisting the Person, and offices of the HOLY GHOST. And I no less beg of him to observe, that he brings the same charge against their fathers. Hence, it will undeniably follow, that it was GOD the HOLY GHOST, who presided over the Church, as well under the Old Testament, as the New. The Reader should carefully cherish those sweet testimonies, to the Almighty agency of the HOLY GHOST; (and especially in an age like the present,) as peculiarly blessed. And I pray the Reader to observe, how

blessedly and decidedly *Stephen* speaks, to the character of the LORD JESUS, when calling him the *Just One*; a well known name among the Israelites, of the *Messiah*, Zephaniah 3:5; Zechariah 9:9; Acts 3:14; Acts 2:14,15.

Let the Reader remark, for it is well worthy to be remarked, *how* very differently this sermon of *Stephen's* wrought, from that of *Peter's*, on the day of *Pentecost*, Acts 2:37. *Here*, the bitterness of their hearts was so great, that it could not be concealed, for they gnashed upon him with their teeth. *There*, the blessed contrition which followed shewed itself, in an earnest cry of the soul; *Men and brethren what shall we do?* And doth not the Reader immediately discover the cause? *Stephen's* sermon was not a Jot more pointed than *Peter's*; for in both, they were charged with murdering CHRIST, Acts 2:23, But the mighty difference, in the effect of the preaching, arose from the work of GOD the HOLY GHOST, in the *one* instance; and the want of that Almighty work, in the *other*. Here lay all the difference. And, as *Stephen* told his auditory, this was the cause all along, with their fathers, as with them, *resisting the* HOLY GHOST. I very earnestly beg the Reader to consider well the subject. If men, and especially ministers, were but truly sensible of those things, with what earnestness would they seek the influences of the HOLY SPIRIT, from whose grace alone it is, that the word preached, can become profitable in them that hear it. Oh! thou Almighty LORD of thy Church! *do thou direct my heart into the love of GOD, and into the patient waiting for* CHRIST, 2 Thessalonians 3:5.

There are many very blessed and precious things, in this closing scene of the death of *Stephen*, highly meriting our

closest attention; but I can only detain the Reader to mention them. His being *full of the* HOLY GHOST means, fresh manifestations and renewings of the HOLY GHOST, shed upon him more abundantly, to prepare him for the cruel and painful death, which he was called to. It is not without a well-founded hope, (and this example serves in proof,) that special and peculiar exercises of the LORD'S people are supported, with more than ordinary grace. A dying hour, is sometimes eminently sanctified with living enjoyments in the LORD, Deuteronomy 33:25; Zechariah 14:6-7. What a gracious act of the LORD JESUS, was this manifestation of himself to *Stephen*, in such a moment? I pray the Reader both to mark the grace of the LORD to his servant; and no less to consider the revelation thereby made to the Church, as it really is, the fullest confirmation of his eternal power and GODHEAD, Let the Reader notice, how *Stephen* speaks of him, in his Mediator-character and office, while describing him as the *Shechinah*, in proof of his divine nature. And I beg him not to overlook the LORD'S posture of *standing*; as if in readiness, both to receive *Stephen* to his arms, and to execute judgment upon his enemies. And I request the Reader the rather to notice this posture of the LORD JESUS, because, as far as I recollect, after the ascension of JESUS he is always spoken of as *sitting*, to receive his people, and to behold the destruction of his foes, Mark 16:19; Psalm 110:1. For *the right hand of GOD*. See Ephesians 1:20.

I have already (Chapter 6) stated the circumstances relating to the stoning of *Stephen*, as a full, and decided testimony, in proof that he died a martyr, for his asserting the GODHEAD of CHRIST. Hence I add nothing further on that subject in this

place. But I must detain the Reader, to call his attention for a moment, to what is said of *Saul*, who afterwards became the great Apostle *Paul*. This is the first account we have of him in Scripture. And here we find him, noted by the HOLY GHOST, as receiving the clothes of the witnesses, which stoned *Stephen*. *Paul* himself, when afterwards speaking of this awful transaction, saith, that *he was standing by, and consenting unto his death and kept the raiment of them that slew him*, Acts 22:19-20. Reader! what did the grace of GOD accomplish in this man? And what cannot the same grace accomplish in every heart of his people? How sweetly the Chapter closeth, in the relation of the death of *Stephen*? A loud voice like his LORD! And the humble imitation of the LORD'S example, praying for his murderers! And was not CHRIST'S prayer heard, and answered on the day of *Pentecost*! Acts 2:36-37. And in the conversion of *Paul*, was *Stephen's* prayer forgotten Reader! mark the expression of the HOLY GHOST, respecting *Stephen's* death: *he fell asleep*. Remember! it is the language of GOD the SPIRIT, when speaking of the dead, which die in the LORD, to say, *he fell asleep*. Oh! how different, both in life, and death, are the living and dying in the LORD, from those who know not CHRIST! The dead in CHRIST are as much in union with CHRIST in death as life. For though death changeth the place, yet not the state. *They sleep in JESUS*! 1 Thessalonians 4:14; Revelation 14:3; Romans 14:8-9. And mark *Stephen's* last words. *Calling upon GOD and saying LORD JESUS*. So then, JESUS is GOD.

REFLECTIONS

READER! let you and I bless GOD the SPIRIT, for this most precious sermon of his servant *Stephen*. Surely GOD the HOLY GHOST would not have caused it to have been so fully recorded, (since we have already the whole subject contained in it, at large in the scriptures before written,) had not this Almighty Teacher in the Church intended from it some sweet instructions, and which are here very particularly set forth. It is our mercy therefore to attend to them, and bless the LORD for his grace in giving them. And what a light is thrown upon the history of *Moses*, by *Stephen's* sermon, in that part of it (which without this information we should not have known,) of his early apprehension, that the LORD would use him, as an instrument, for the delivery of his brethren? And what a blessed proof we draw from *Stephen's* sermon, in addition to the other relations we have in Scripture, that it was the LORD JESUS, which spake to *Moses* from the bush. Reader! these are sweet things. May you and I learn to prize them very highly; and bless GOD the HOLY GHOST, *in* having given them to us, by his servant *Stephen*.

Precious LORD JESUS! be thou eternally loved, and praised, for the grace manifested to thy dying martyr, in such a season of peculiar trial. Oh! let thine whole Church, from age to age, be refreshed in the sweet assurance, such a memorable instance affords, of thy continual presence with thy people. May my soul, and the souls of all thy redeemed, learn from it, how we are to commit our departing spirits into thine Almighty hand, in the hour of death, as *unto a*

CHAPTER 8

CONTENTS

The Church under Persecution; which affords Occasion to Philip to preach CHRIST in Samaria. Peter and John visit Samaria. The awful History of Simon Magus. Philip preacheth to an Ethiopian, and baptizeth him.

ACTS 8:1-8

And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. (2) And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. (3) As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. (4) Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. (5) Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. (6) And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. (7) For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. (8) And there was great joy in that city.

The opening of this Chapter, is connected with the history of *Stephen*, in the preceding. And it appears very plain, from what *Paul* related to *Agrippa*, Acts 26:10-11, that *Stephen's* death was followed with many others, in which *Paul* took part. And no doubt the HOLY GHOST hath caused this record to be made of *Paul*, purposely to magnify the exceeding riches, and freeness of grace, in such an illustrious display of it, as was manifested in the after conversion of *Paul*. See also Acts 22:4-5; Galatians 1:13. As to those which were scattered abroad, it should seem to have been some of the seventy disciples, or probably some of the newly converted believers at the day of

Pentecost. For we find, verse 1 (Acts 8:1), that the Apostles remained firm at *Jerusalem*. And, verse 14 (Acts 8:14), they sent *Peter* and *John* to *Samaria*, when they had received tidings of *Philip's* ministry in that city. It is more than likely, that however the *Sanhedrim* ventured to attack the disciples, they were overawed at present, not daring to touch the Apostles. The death of *Ananias and Sapphira*, was still before them. But, let the Reader observe, how much this persecution ministered to the promotion of the Gospel. And this was, as JESUS had appointed, See Matthew 10:23; Acts 1:8. Oh! could the enemies of CHRIST and his Church, but be made sensible, how the LORD overrules their malice to his glory, in causing them to become the very instruments, to bring about the reverse of what they intend, how would they sometimes shudder? Psalm 75:10.

The Reader will recollect, that about four years before, the LORD JESUS had visited *Samaria*. At which time the LORD had wrought the conversion of many of the people, John 4:39-42. *Philip's* ministry differed from his Master's, in that *Philip* wrought miracles in JESUS's name, in confirmation of the truth: but we read of *no* miracle wrought by JESUS, when there. But I beg the Reader not to overlook, the comprehensive manner of *Philip's* preaching: CHRIST. Yes! all preaching is folded up in CHRIST. JEHOVAH'S CHRIST; is the One, and the only One Ordinance of heaven, Acts 4:12. And let the Reader further observe, what powerful effects followed *Philip's* preaching, while CHRIST was the whole sum and substance; text, sermon, and application! We are told, that unclean spirits came out of many; and palsies, and lameness were healed. And might we not hope, that if the LORD the SPIRIT were to commission

preachers now, as *Philip* was commissioned then, to preach CHRIST; would not the same blessed effects, spiritually considered, follow? Oh! ye ministers of the LORD JESUS! see to it, that Philip's plan be your plan; if ye hope the same blessings to follow, Preach CHRIST to the people! Devils, and all unclean spirits, must be dispossessed, when GOD the HOLY GHOST sends the word, and CHRIST is preached by his power.

ACTS 8:9-25

But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: (10) To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. (11) And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. (12) But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. (13) Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. (14) Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: (15) Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (16) (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) (17) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. (18) And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, (19) Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. (20) But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. (21) Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. (22) Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. (23) For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. (24) Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye

have spoken come upon me. (25) And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

I pray the Reader not to overlook, how the Church of GOD, in all ages, was broken in upon, by ungodly men. Here is a Sorcerer, and like another *Balaam*, one that used enchantment, rising up among the people, and professing great things. And this man carries matters with so good a face, that at the preaching of *Philip*, he puts on the appearance of being converted; and is said *to have believed*, that is, in head knowledge, and no further, he was convinced of the truth as it is in JESUS, And so plausible, even to *Philip* himself, (who was commissioned to work miracles, but not to read hearts,) appeared his conversion; that he was baptized, as well as others. But when *Peter*, and *John* came down to *Samaria*; and the same miraculous gifts of the HOLY GHOST was poured out upon those whom the LORD had secretly inclined their hearts to the faith that is in CHRIST JESUS, as were given at *Pentecost*; then the detection of the hypocrisy of this awful character took place. For, as soon as he saw, through laying on of the hands of the Apostles, that the HOLY GHOST was given; he took for granted, that this power, as he conceived the Apostles possessed in themselves, would be more profitable if he could obtain it for gain, than his sham tricks had been, which he had before practiced; and therefore he offered the Apostles money, that he might exercise the same privilege. Reader! pause and contemplate the extreme awfulness of such a character. To what a length men may run, and impose upon others, yea, and through the deceitfulness of sin, impose not unfrequently upon themselves

also? How many of the character of *Simon Magus*, have been, and now are, in the midst of professing Churches, who can calculate? It is a solemn consideration; and enough to excite (as no doubt the LORD the SPIRIT designed it should) jealousy in every congregation! Neither would any truly faithful souls desire but to be jealous, with a godly jealousy over themselves and others. Gold, never shrinks from the trial of the hottest fire. It is only tinsel, which cannot bear the furnace.

Ministers of CHRIST ought never to be discouraged, when at any time, unprincipled characters, like *Simon Magus*, creep in among the faithful. CHRIST himself had a *Judas* in his twelve. And *Philip* here baptized an infidel. In all ages of the Church, it hath been so; yea, it is profitable to the LORD's people, that it should be so. Such detections of hypocrites, when they take place, make the faithful truly jealous over themselves. And seeing that men, even the greatest men, like *Philip*, cannot discover hearts, the humble believer is hereby led to look to the LORD. And his language is: *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,* Psalm 139:23-24.

Reader! are you truly in earnest to know the ground upon which you stand? Though men cannot judge for you, the LORD's grace will enable you to judge for yourself. Look *inward* for divine teaching; and judge not by things *outward*, how promising soever they may appear. The witness of GOD the HOLY GHOST, in the heart and conscience, by his regenerating grace is, in the place of a thousand arguments void of it. A man may learn, as *Simon Magus* did, by the preaching of

CHRIST, who CHRIST is; and in head knowledge soar very high. But a soul-renewing apprehension of CHRIST can only be learnt from GOD the HOLY GHOST. And when any one of those precious souls, whom the FATHER hath given to the SON, hath been awakened from the death of sin, by the regenerating power of the HOLY GHOST: when from feeling, and knowing, by that Almighty Teacher, the plague of his own heart, he hath passed under the rod of the Covenant; the sentence of death in himself, and the sentence of condemnation under GOD's holy law, which he is conscious he hath broken; when these precious effects are inwrought in the soul, by the power of the HOLY GHOST: there can be no deception here. And when he that thus convinceth of sin, hath convinced also of CHRIST'S righteousness; when JESUS in his person, grace, and glory, is set up in the soul; and the heart is secretly and sweetly led to look to him, and to rely upon him for salvation: no soul deceptions can take place here, for such an apprehension of CHRIST, brings with it a sweet communion with CHRIST; and the believer is made *to abound in hope, through the power of the HOLY GHOST*, Romans 15:13.

I must not take leave of the awful character of *Simon Magus*, whose history hath given occasion to the observations I have offered upon it, without first remarking to the Reader, what *Peter* said to this man, after he had told him, that *he had no part, nor lot, in this matter*; that is, no part nor lot in CHRIST, neither in the gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT. The Apostle bid him *repent of this his wickedness*; meaning his awful offer of money, to purchase the gifts of the HOLY GHOST: concluding, (as it should seem,) that, added to the natural state of original and actual sin in the Adam-nature of universal

apostasy, this sin of his was little short of the unpardonable sin of blasphemy against the HOLY GHOST. Let the Reader pause over this view of the subject. And then let him ask, what tremendous judgment may be supposed to follow in the numberless cases of modern times, where the sale of ministerial appointments (and from this man's history called *Simony*,) have been carried on for money!

One word more on this awful instance of hypocrisy, in the case of *Simon Magus*. When *Peter* bid him repent of this sin, the Apostle could not mean, that he had power to change his own heart; or that he could practice a Christian grace, which alone comes from GOD's gift, and CHRIST is exalted to bestow. Neither could he mean, that one, whom he had before said had neither part nor lot in this matter of CHRIST, would even receive repentance unto life. But the repentance *Peter* spake of was the repentance of this particular sin; for he puts a *perhaps* upon it: that this aggravated transgression might not bring a further load of guilt upon his head. And what *Simon Magus* in the answer he gave to *Peter* said, is to the same effect. He desired, as *Pharaoh* desired *Moses*, that he would pray for him. But, like *Pharaoh*, the heart remained hardened. He dreaded the punishment likely to follow, and would have avoided it. But we hear no cry of soul in either, for a change of heart, Exodus 10:17.

ACTS 8:26-40

And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. (27) And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, (28) Was

returning, and sitting in his chariot read Isaiah the prophet. (29) Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. (30) And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Isaiah, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? (31) And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. (32) The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: (33) In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. (34) And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? (35) Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. (36) And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? (37) And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. (38) And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. (39) And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. (40) But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

We have great cause to be thankful, for the insertion of this very interesting record in this book of GOD; as it forms so beautiful a comment upon that part of *Isaiah's* writings, what hath been, and ever must be, dear to the Church: I mean the fifty-third Chapter of his Prophecy (Isaiah 53). Though we might have discovered, under divine teaching, much of CHRIST, in what the Prophet hath there written; yet we might have hesitated, in decidedly asserting, as we now do, and from an authority not to be questioned, that the Prophet wholly referred to the LORD JESUS CHRIST, in all that he hath there delivered. And was it not gracious then in GOD the

SPIRIT, to put the matter beyond all doubt, when he commissioned *Philip*, and taught him from the same Scripture, to preach JESUS?

By the ministry of an Angel *Philip* is directed to go towards the wilderness of *Judaea*. It is very blessed, when ministers are sent forth by an immediate call of the HOLY GHOST. It becomes the most infallible testimony of success, Acts 16:9-14; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10. The wilderness, in this case, shall blossom as the rose, Isaiah 35:1. This *Ethiopian*, though he had been at *Jerusalem*, was returning as dark, and ignorant, as he came. But the LORD, though he found not CHRIST in the temple, was pleased to send a special messenger after him, that he might find him in the desert. And frequently the LORD throws a damp upon ordinances, in order to teach his people, that it is not by means of grace only, the LORD doth always work. The LORD hath blessed, and doth bless the means: and his people are commanded to make use of them, and attend them: but they are not unfrequently led to see, that the LORD works *without* them, as well as *with* them, according to the purposes of his own holy will and pleasure.

Everything in the relation of this sweet scriptural record is beautiful and interesting. The HOLY GHOST directing *Philip* to go near to the chariot, and converse with the *Ethiopian*: the teachable mind which the LORD had given to this man: the having the Prophecy of *Isaiah* with him in his chariot, that *Philip* might preach from; and the portion which the man had been reading: all these, were in the predisposing circumstances of the LORD, to bring about the great event, which the LORD all along had intended. And it is very blessed sometimes to see, how corresponding things are made to

meet together, in the accomplishment of the LORD's purpose. It were unnecessary to offer any comment upon this blessed portion of *Isaiah's* prophecy. The whole life and ministry of the LORD JESUS, and especially the concluding scenes of both, at his crucifixion and death, are direct in point; and so compleat a paraphrase of the prophecy, as if it had been written after the events took place, instead of a prediction, so many hundred years before.

The question of the *Ethiopian*, to whom it referred, was highly proper, and which gave occasion to *Philip* to preach JESUS yet more fully. He took for his text these words of the prophet: but no doubt he amplified the subject, and held forth the LORD in all the endearing features of character. But what I chiefly wish may be impressed on the Reader's mind is, what GOD the HOLY GHOST hath said, and on which too much emphasis cannot be laid, *then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him JESUS*. Reader! do not overlook the whole burden of *Philip's* preaching was JESUS. This was his text and sermon in the city of *Samaria* (Acts 8:5) and the same was his text and sermon in the desert of *Judaea*. He found enough in this one text, and subject, for every preaching. Oh! that all modern Preachers could, and would, do the same.

What a short but comprehensive system of faith *Philip* made of it; And yet how very full, and to the point. In the belief of JESUS CHRIST the SON of GOD, is contained all the grand and leading doctrines of the everlasting Covenant. The separation of *Philip* from the *Eunuch* is very striking: and serves to teach us, that when the LORD's purposes are accomplished, it matters not how the instrument performing the LORD's will is

removed. *Philip* was found at *Azotus*, about thirty miles distant, if, (as some suppose,) *Ashdod* was the same place, 1 Samuel 6:17. And the *Eunuch* went on his way rejoicing. A new light shined in upon him; and a new life the LORD enabled him to enter upon. Well might he *rejoice in hope of the glory of GOD!*

REFLECTIONS

READER! behold in this chapter a true representation of the church of JESUS in all ages. In *one view* persecuted, and while the friends of the bridegroom are cast down, the enemy triumphing with an high hand. In *another*, like *Samaria*, where the word of GOD is faithfully preached, and graciously received, there is great joy in that place. See, opposed to the faithfulness of *Peter* and *John*, the sorcery and hypocrisy of *Simon Magus*; and mark in all churches similar effects, from the contrast of grace and corruption; CHRIST and Belial.

Blessed JESUS! let the sweet view here afforded, of thy watchful eye over this *Ethiopian*, who came from a vast distance led by thy grace to seek the LORD, in sending a special messenger after him, be uppermost in the thoughts of thy people. JESUS hath said, and this sweet scripture confirms it, *all that the FATHER hath given him shall come to him*. And rather than one of CHRIST'S little ones shall perish for lack of knowledge, the LORD will meet them in the desert; and when ordinances fail, the LORD will work without them. Oh! for grace, that all the ministers of the LORD'S sending, may, like *Philip*, preach CHRIST to the people. And oh! that all, to whom the LORD shall reveal himself, as to this *Ethiopian* may, like him, *go on their way rejoicing!*

CHAPTER 9

CONTENTS

The wonderful History of Saul's Conversion. The Effect it had upon the Jews. Peter healeth Eneas, and raiseth Tabitha from the dead.

ACTS 9:1-2

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, (2) And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

The HOLY GHOST hath most graciously shown, in the history of *Saul of Tarsus*, to what a desperate height the human mind void of grace is capable of advancing, in malice and hatred, against the LORD, and that the church of CHRIST might learn, that there is no difference between one man and another, in the Adam-nature in which all are born; the LORD the SPIRIT hath here shewn in the example of one of the most eminent servants of JESUS, as he afterwards proved, what our state would do, while unawakened and unregenerated before the LORD: and what the LORD enables his people to do when called by sovereign grace from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan to the living GOD, I pray the Reader to enter upon the wonderful history here before us with prayer to the LORD the SPIRIT, that all his gracious designs in giving this relation to the Church, and frequently repeated as it is, may be blessed both to the Writer and Reader of this *Poor Man's Commentary*; that in the perusal of it, *we may be made wise unto salvation through the faith that is in CHRIST JESUS.*

See Acts 22; Acts 25; Galatians 1; 1 Timothy 1:12; 1 Timothy 1:16.

It should seem, that *Saul* at this time, had fairly routed all the preachers of the Gospel, which were at *Jerusalem*, excepting the Apostles; and that he made no attack upon them, we can only refer into the LORD'S sovereignty, such as JESUS exercised when on earth, in their personal protection. (See John 18:8. and Commentary upon it.) And now the fury of his heart led him, as he said elsewhere, (Acts 22:4; Acts 26:9-11) to persecute them even unto strange cities; determining, if it were possible, to exterminate CHRIST and his Church from the earth. Reader! pause and contemplate the subject, for it is exceedingly momentous. Who should have thought, that in the very moment this man was thus aiming destruction at the LORD'S people, that he was himself a chosen vessel of CHRIST, and had been so from all eternity? Who that heard the blasphemy of the-man, and beheld the bitter cruelties he exercised on the LORD'S redeemed ones, compelling them to blaspheme; Acts 26:11, could have conceived, that the very mouth which breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the LORD, should soon preach CHRIST in all his fulness and glory; and to feel the salvation of souls so near his heart, as *to wish himself accursed from CHRIST for his brethren, his kinsmen after the flesh*, Romans 9:3. But what cannot the grace of GOD accomplish? What will it not accomplish, rather than one, whom the FATHER hath given the SON in an everlasting covenant which cannot be broken, should perish? Reader! I pray you at every step you take in this wonderful history, figure to yourself that you hear the man, whose conversion the HOLY GHOST hath here so sweetly

recorded, proclaiming in his own words, *For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first JESUS CHRIST might shew forth all long-sufferings for a pattern to them, which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting*, 1 Timothy 1:16.

I stop the Reader in the midst of the history, to beg him to remark with me, that it is evident, both *from* the stoning of *Stephen*, the binding unto prison, and death, men and women, and *Saul's* going to *Damascus* for the same purpose, the power of the *Sanhedrim* was not totally gone. But if he compares this part of *Saul's* history here, with that part of it we meet with when he stood before the council to answer for his life, as related, (Acts 22) and when the chief captain rescued him from them; he will perceive that a change had then taken place. And if he will prosecute the subject a little further, (and it is a subject of some moment to ascertain the point,) he will discover, that the *Sanhedrim* now no longer exercised their authority in cases of life and death. For when *Festus* declared *Paul's* cause to *Agrippa*, he made this remarkable observation: *It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him*, Acts 25:16. And what a beautiful proof this is, in confirmation of *Jacob's* prophecy, of the departure of *the sceptre from Judah* now CHRIST *the Shiloh* was come, and the *gathering of the people to CHRIST* was taking place in the earth! Genesis 49:10. See Commentary on Acts 25:16.

ACTS 9:3-4

And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: (4) And he

fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

Saul had made a vigorous pursuit in his journey, for he drew near to *Damascus* we are told, which was a distance little short of an hundred and fifty miles from *Jerusalem*, when stopped in his mad career. Thus far the LORD permitted him to go, and no further; and here was the proud waves of his boiling anger restrained. I have often thought, when pondering over this history, what a trembling state the poor timid disciples of JESUS must have been in, at *Damascus*, when they knew that this dreadful persecutor was hastening towards them, and that he was just at hand! And I have as often thought how sweetly JESUS hath taught his people from it, upon all occasions of exercise,

to bring all their anxieties to him, and in such a view as this, (and many more there are in scripture to the same amount,) leave every event with the LORD. See Isaiah 57; Daniel 3:17-18. And I believe, if the LORD'S people would learn to make just calculations of the LORD'S dealings with them, they would find that the seasons of more than ordinary distresses, have proved in the end, some more than ordinary seasons of special mercies. JESUS hath taken occasion from them, to make them more sensible of his presence and love. *There is a time to favor Zion*, Psalm 102:13. And what time so blessed, as when the enemy threatens? What hours more precious to hear the love-calls of JESUS, as when the world storms, or our own hearts are misgiving? See that sweet scripture, Mark 4:37-40.

But to proceed. The first act of sovereign grace here said to have been manifested to *Saul*, was *a light from heaven*. He afterward, when speaking of it, described it as above the brightness of the sun, though it was now mid-day, Acts 26:13. And the next thing we hear was, that he fell to the earth. He was unhorsed at once, and the LORD struck him to the ground. And what a mercy that he had not struck him to hell. No doubt that in the after stages of life, when he looked back upon this transaction, he often thought so. Reader! so may every man; so may you, so may I, when we tremblingly look back, and ponder the days and years of our unregeneracy! Oh! the melting subject! To think of being preserved *in* JESUS CHRIST, while fighting *against* JESUS CHRIST, Jude 1.

But what must have been the feelings of Saul when JESUS called him by name, yea twice, *Saul! Saul! why persecutest thou me!* That this was CHRIST, speaking in his human nature from heaven to *Saul*, is most evident by what followed, and which will presently be proved. But in the mean time, I pray the Reader not to overlook, nor hastily pass away from the very blessed manifestation, the LORD JESUS here made of himself. There is a great sweetness of expression, both in the LORD's calling *Saul* by name, and doing it twice, to express his earnestness and love. And there is a most blessed manner in our dear LORD's expostulation with *Saul*, in telling him, that his cruelties to his people were cruelties to himself. *Saul! Saul! why persecutest thou me?* Reader! never forget this. JESUS is himself persecuted whensoever one of his little ones is offended. *Whoso toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye*, Zechariah 2:8. If this was properly considered by the world, how would they tremble to afflict the LORD's people? The foot

cannot be crushed, and the head not feel. And what a scripture of alarm is that, *For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD!* Psalm 12:5

ACTS 9:5-6

And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. (6) And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

Nothing surely can be more simply and yet more beautifully related, than this wonderful action. Though it is a work wholly supernatural, in the LORD himself speaking from heaven to a poor sinner fallen to the earth, with the splendor of the glory which shone upon him; yet, through grace, we are enabled to enter into a proper apprehension of the whole scene. The LORD though overwhelming both the body and mind of *Saul* with shame and fear, yet gave him strength to put forth the earnest question of enquiry, and to ask who it was that thus condescended to speak to him. No doubt, the same Almighty power which shone *without*, shone no less *within* the mind of *Saul*, that when he said, *who art thou LORD?* his heart told him that it must be JESUS. He humbly and tremblingly put the question, but dreaded the answer. And when the LORD said, *I am JESUS whom thou persecutest!* what must have been the terrors of his soul? For although the LORD spake no doubt with tenderness, (for JESUS cannot speak to his own, but with tenderness as JESUS,) yet the self-reproaches, and self-condemnation, rushing like a torrent through every chamber of *Saul's* mind, could not but carry all before it, and must have left him a wreck of distress before the LORD. The only

astonishment is, (and indeed can be ascribed to no other cause, but grace supporting him,) that he had not given up the ghost through anguish of spirit.

I admire the very blessed manner, and I think that the Reader will admire it also,) in which the LORD JESUS spake to *Saul*, in calling himself JESUS. Had he said, as he might have said, I am the GOD of thy Fathers, *the GOD of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob*; *Saul* might have pleaded, that his persecution of the Church of CHRIST was out of zeal for the LORD'S glory. But when from this *Shechinah*, JESUS himself spake to him as *Abraham's* GOD, and called himself JESUS, the weapons of all warfare fell at once from his hands and all self-defense was taken away. And no doubt he lay trembling on the earth, expecting that the next words of the LORD would be to sentence him to hell.

Reader! pause, admire, and adore, the wonders of grace! For the same as was manifested here to *Saul*, is, and must be manifested, more or less, to every child of GOD. *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory* of GOD. And when a child of GOD is recovered from the *Adam*-state of a fallen nature, into the glorious liberty of the sons of GOD; then to look back and review the wonderful mercy shewn him in all the properties of it, opens such a prospect, as cannot but melt down the soul to the very dust before GOD. The freeness of it, the seasonableness of it, the greatness of it, the unexpected, unlooked for, yea, unthought of, nature of it, and its everlasting, unchanging property; these till the soul with *a joy unspeakable and full of glory!* Oh! the wonders of distinguishing grace! That when sinners deserve wrath, they

find mercy. And when in themselves they are hastening to hell, the LORD is bringing them in CHRIST to heaven!

ACTS 9:7-8

And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. (8) And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

No doubt, the whole party which were with *Saul*, were men of the same description as himself; but we read of no work of grace wrought upon their hearts. They stood speechless, and heard a voice; were overawed with what was going on; but unconscious of any thing more. Reader! so hath it been in all ages of the Church, so is it now, and so must it be for ever. When the voice from heaven, which was heard by the Jews at CHRIST'S baptism, declared him to be the beloved SON of GOD, it had no effect upon them, Matthew 3:16-17. When again, just before his crucifixion, GOD the FATHER answered CHRIST'S prayer to glorify his SON, and said, *I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again*; though some thought that it thundered, others that an angel spake to JESUS, yet no one change was wrought by it upon a single heart of those men, John 12:28-29. Nothing short of the work of GOD the HOLY GHOST upon the heart, can change the heart, *to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of GOD in the face of JESUS CHRIST*, 2 Corinthians 4:6.

ACTS 9:9

And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

I should not have thought it necessary to have paused over those verses, with any other remarks, than merely to have

observed, that the LORD'S account of the manner in which those days were spent by *Saul*, was in prayer, see verse 11 (Acts 9:11.) But as from hence, it hath been argued by some, that in every saving conversion of the heart to the LORD, there must be, according to *Saul's* example, three days fasting and agonizing, (as it is called;) I conceive that it would be proper, rather to enquire what GOD the HOLY GHOST hath said on this important subject, than what man teacheth; and here also, as in other cases, to *compare spiritual things with spiritual*.

Now very certain it is, that though *Saul*, and it may be many beside, have lain a longer time than others in the pangs of the new birth; yet GOD the HOLY GHOST hath caused to be recorded many instances of an act of grace producing an immediate change of heart, *from death to life, and from the power of Satan to the living GOD*. *Matthew* the publican, yea all the Apostles at once followed JESUS at his call. *Lydia's* heart was instantly opened by the LORD, and we hear of no delay, nor pangs of the new birth. Even the *Jailor* at *Philippi*, though convulsed at midnight, was made joyful in CHRIST before the morning, Acts 16:14; Acts 16:25-34. And the Church of the *Philippians* are said to have been *in the fellowship of the Gospel from the first day until now*, Philippians 1:5. And the Church of the *Thessalonians* in like manner are said *to have received the word in much affliction, with joy of the HOLY GHOST*, 1 Thessalonians 1:6. So that, whatever men may say of such things, very evident it is, that the LORD hath not said it. The LORD the HOLY GHOST works as an Almighty Sovereign, when he calls any by his grace. And while *some* are long in the state of unawakened nature; and *others*, early called to the knowledge of the LORD; yet in every case of a saving

conversion of the heart to GOD; *all these worketh that One and the self same SPIRIT dividing to every man severally as he will.* For as in the birth of nature, it is not the violent pains or the ease which determine the child to be born; but the safe delivery and the reality of life in the babe which constitutes the birth; so in grace, the cry of the soul, and the hungering and thirsting for CHRIST; these are the sure signs of the new birth, in which *the SPIRIT witnesseth to the spirits of the LORD'S people, that they are the children of GOD,* Romans 8:16.

ACTS 9:10-19

And there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. (11) And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, (12) And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. (13) Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: (14) And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. (15) But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: (16) For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. (17) And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. (18) And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. (19) And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

It is wonderful to observe, by what instruments and means, the LORD is pleased sometimes to work. According to our view of things, we should have supposed that the LORD would have sent *Saul* back to Jerusalem to the College of the Apostles, for whatever instruction the LORD was pleased to appoint him; and not send for this poor timid *Ananias* be his servant in this business. Nay, one should have thought, that after the LORD JESUS himself had called to *Saul* from heaven, he would have needed no ministry from others upon earth. But here, as in numberless instances, *God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways his ways*, Isaiah 55:8.

It must have been a cutting word, though full of tenderness in *Ananias*, when at the first interview, yea, and the first word which he spake to *Saul*, he called him, Brother! The conscious breast of *Saul* could not but have felt it very sensibly. And it must have been what *Saul* in after days himself called *heaping coals of fire upon my head*, in melting down all anger in *overcoming evil with good*, (Romans 12:20-21) when *Ananias* added the precious name of JESUS, and said, *the LORD, even JESUS, which appeared unto thee in the way, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the HOLY GHOST*. Who shall describe the blessedness of this interview between *Saul* and *Ananias*? Who shall speak of the new feelings in *Saul's* heart, and the joys of both, when *Saul* first opened his eyes, and they saw each other? But, Reader! think what feelings of the soul must that be to every redeemed one of the LORD'S, when at death, the spiritual eye first sees JESUS, that *brother born for adversity!* What sensations must the first glimpse of Him in the eternal world

occasion, when from faith to sight, the soul sees him as he is, and is then brought home to dwell with him for ever!

ACTS 9:20-31

And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. (21) But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? (22) But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. (23) And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him: (24) But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. (25) Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket. (26) And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. (27) But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. (28) And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. (29) And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. (30) Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. (31) Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

I beg the Reader to observe, (for it is highly important to be observed,) how immediately *Saul* preached CHRIST, and in that preaching, proclaimed his GODHEAD. Well he might indeed, having been both converted and ordained by the LORD himself, without human instruments, and without human forms. And so he tells us: *I certify to you, (said he,) brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but*

by the revelation of JESUS CHRIST, Galatians 1:11-12. So, then, if *Saul* was never taught it by man, and yet was taught it by JESUS CHRIST, can any form of words more decidedly speak *Saul's* sentiments, that he considered CHRIST GOD? Reader! do not overlook these precious things, for they are; at all times precious, and never more so, than in the present CHRIST-despising generation! You see how *Saul* confounded the Jews which were at *Damascus*, in proving the GODHEAD of CHRIST. And all faithful ministers of the present hour confound the various heresies of the present day, in proving CHRIST the same way.

We are told that all that heard him were amazed. Yes! all the unbelieving Jews were amazed, as unbelievers now are astonished and remain silent, overawed by the demonstration of the SPIRIT and power, whensoever CHRIST is fully preached and glorified. But, true believers in CHRIST then, as true believers in CHRIST now, from the same grace in their own hearts, could not but be sensible by what sovereign power the whole is induced, and learn to glorify GOD in his mercy, Galatians 1:24.

ACTS 9:32-35

And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. (33) And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. (34) And Peter said unto him, Aeneas Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. (35) And all that dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and turned to the Lord.

What a most interesting record is here! It is impossible to read it but with delight. To behold the sovereignty of the very name of JESUS! This poor bed-ridden man, had been palsied

eight years. And yet, as one might be led to hope from the familiarity with which *Peter* accosted him, in calling him by his name, that he knew the LORD (See Acts 14:9). And how many of the LORD'S hidden ones are palsied, crippled, diseased, or under some bodily infirmity or other, for years together. The bed of sickness is blessed, upon which JESUS puts his people. They are sure of the frequent visits of their Almighty Physician. I hope the Reader will not fail to observe, by what name and power, *Peter* bid *Eneas* arise. See Acts 3:6; Acts 3:16; Acts 4:8-12. And I hope the Reader will no fail to recollect also, how fully these acts of the Apostles, confirmed their LORD'S promise to them before his departure; that even greater works than He himself had done, should be done by them, when He was returned to his FATHER. See John 14:12; Mark 16:17-18. And yet more particularly than all, I hope the Reader will not forget to connect with those views of the Apostles' miracles, in the name, and by the authority of CHRIST, on the bodies of his people, the still greater works which GOD the HOLY GHOST, by their instrumentality, wrought on their souls. Here were works indeed, and miracles of grace, when the palsied in soul, yea, the dead in trespasses and sins, were raised *from death to life*, and converted *from the power of Satan to the living GOD*.

ACTS 9:36-43

Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did. (37) And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. (38) And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. (39) Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the

upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. (40) But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. (41) And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. (42) And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. (43) And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

The HOLY GHOST hath closed this most sweet and interesting chapter; with the relation of a miracle wrought by *Peter*, in his LORD'S name, on a godly woman, in raising her from the dead. *This Joppa* was a little sea-port in the tribe of *Dan*, made memorable in scripture by the history of *Jonah*, Jonah 1:3. Her name was *Tabitha* in the Hebrew, but the Greeks called her *Dorcas*. But the most delightful part of her character is, that she was a disciple of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. And it is an honorable testimony given of her at the same time, that she adorned that doctrine she professed, in being *full of good works, and alms-deeds which she did*. It is truly blessed to see a child of GOD *alive* in the discharge of all the duties of a believer, while at the same time *dead* to every idea of merit in the performance of them. To consider those things as blessed *effects* from grace in the heart, but not contributing an atom in adding to the *cause* of salvation. Nothing can be more lovely where this is the case. But such instances are rare to be found. For such is the corruption of our fallen nature, that these things more frequently minister to spiritual pride and pharisaical righteousness, than to the divine glory. And that soul must *be* highly taught of GOD indeed, who is in earnest, and zealous in laying himself out for usefulness in GOD'S Church, and among GOD'S people; and yet in proportion as the

LORD blesseth him in such deeds, he layeth lower and lower in the dust before GOD. Who so far from taking to himself the most distant idea of merit, from a life like this considers himself only as a greater debtor to the LORD for having called him to the service, and given him both grace and ability to discharge it. One so taught of the LORD, will feel more humbled at every step he takes as the LORD'S Almoner, and will be astonished at the grace which employs him, when he considers, that the same LORD hath angels at his command, for all his errands of mercy!

I admire the diligence of *Peter*, in being here, and there, and every where, at the call of the LORD'S people, and in the LORD'S service. The Apostle felt, what every faithful minister of JESUS ought to feel; that when embarked in the LORD'S service, his time and talents, yea, his very life is not his own. And that service where he can be most useful, is the very spot where he should be always found. Hence from the bed of *Eneas* to the chamber of *Tabitha*, and from *Lydda* to *Joppa*, *Peter* hastens for employment.

I admire also the strong faith, both of *Peter* and of the disciples at those places. It should seem, that the *one* expected miracles, and that the *other* depended in the LORD'S name for strength to perform them. And what cannot that faith accomplish, which the LORD creates in the heart, which is wholly founded on the LORD'S strength, and wholly designed for the LORD'S glory? Reader! let you and I seek grace from the LORD, in the same way, and for the same ends, even CHRIST'S praise, and depend upon it, our day, and our strength in the LORD will be alike. I can do nothing, (said one of old,

highly taught of GOD,) of myself, but *I can do all things through CHRIST strengthening me.*

REFLECTIONS

PAUSE, my soul, over the several miracles recorded in this chapter, and behold the wonders connected with the event of CHRIST tabernacling in the flesh! All, and every circumstance, which hath occurred, or hereafter to be accomplished, in the present life, of the time-state of the Church; all spring out of that one mystery, *GOD manifest in the flesh!* Precious LORD JESUS! what a world of mysteries is thy Church in? What a world of mysteries is the one view of thy love to thy Church? While I read the conversion of *Paul*, the healing of *Eneas*, the bringing back to life *Tabitha*; and ponder the cause of these, and all the numberless miracles recorded in the word of thy grace: while I contemplate the continuation of the same, daily going on through the earth; and all arising from the love of my LORD to his Church; oh! who shall speak *of the love of CHRIST, which passeth knowledge.*

And is this the manner of JESUS, in testifying his love? Doth JESUS indeed delight to raise a persecuting *Saul* from the brink of hell, to employ him in the service of heaven? Will the LORD indeed take pleasure, from having his name proclaimed from those very lips which have been uttering continued blasphemy? Shall he, who consented to the murder of *Stephen*, and persecuted unto death, men and women, of the LORD's people, be the very One JESUS hath chosen to be his honored instrument in the conversion of thousands? LORD! how mysterious thy ways; and how full of grace thy judgments? But, my soul! amidst all these wonders with

which thou art surrounded do not lose sight of what the HOLY GHOST taught *Saul* after his conversion to tell the Church; that *it was for this cause he obtained mercy, that in him the LORD JESUS CHRIST might shew forth all long suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting!*

Reader! let us bless the LORD for the sweet records in this chapter; and for the grace manifested to the Church in the rest which she is here said to have enjoyed after the sharp persecutions. Oh! that those latter ages may find revivals from the LORD among the people; and that *walking in the fear of the LORD, and in the comfort of the HOLY GHOST, they may be multiplied.*

CHAPTER 10

CONTENTS

Cornelius, taught by an Angel, sendeth for Peter. The Apostle is at the same time, taught by a Vision to obey the Call. He preacheth before Cornelius and his Household, and GOD the HOLY GHOST blesseth his Ministry.

ACTS 10:1-16

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, (2) A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always. (3) He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. (4) And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he

said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. (5) And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: (6) He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do. (7) And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; (8) And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa. (9) On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: (10) And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, (11) And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: (12) Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. (13) And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. (14) But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. (15) And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. (16) This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

For the better apprehension of the subject contained in this chapter, it will be proper to consider the scriptural account of the Church of CHRIST, in relation to all the members of CHRIST'S mystical body; and no less to notice, the very different views which the Jewish Church had conceived of it.

Nothing can be more evident, from the whole tenor of revelation, than that the Church of CHRIST from everlasting is one. So CHRIST himself sweetly sings, and so, blessed be GOD, we know. *My dove, my undefiled, (saith JESUS,) is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her,* Song of Solomon 6:9. Hence, both Jew and Gentile are included in this view, and both form but one and

the same. And, although the LORD was pleased for wise and gracious purposes known to himself, to form Israel in the family of *Abraham*, with whom might be *the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of GOD, and the promises, and of whom as concerning the flesh CHRIST came:* Romans 9:4-5, yet these were subsequent transactions to the original and eternal gift of the Church to CHRIST by JEHOVAH. GOD the FATHER in his covenant-office and character, is said to have *chosen the Church in CHRIST before the foundation of the world,* Ephesians 1:4. And all the members of CHRIST'S mystical body, were *written in his book, when as yet there was none of them,* Psalm 140:16; John 17:2. And agreeably to these things, the SON of GOD in our nature, speaking by the spirit of prophecy, ages before his incarnation, yea, from the womb of eternity, is introduced to the Church, as calling upon his Church to listen to him, both Jew and Gentile, as JEHOVAH'S *salvation to the end of the earth.* I pray the Reader before he prosecutes the subject further, that he would turn to the prophet *Isaiah*, in proof of this most blessed and important truth: See *Isaiah* 49:1-6. Nothing can be more decisive in confirmation, that the Church of CHRIST everlastingly was, and is, and can be, but One. And however diversified in the after time-state of the Church, the distinct stock of Jew and Gentile might be formed; yet, under every state, both in time, and to all eternity, CHRIST hath but one Church, and both Jew and Gentile in their relationship to him, are but one fold. Indeed, as if to shew that oneness yet more decidedly, it is to be noted, that *Abraham*, the great father of the Jewish Church, when chosen of GOD for this purpose, was himself a Gentile, (that is, an heathen and idolater,) when called out of *Ur of the Chaldees*, Genesis 11:31; Genesis 12:1. So that in fact,

Abraham was a Gentile before he became a Jew, and thereby it plainly proves, that the name of the *Elder* brother given to the Jew, and the *Younger* to the Gentile, is the reverse of what was the case. See the note on Luke 15:32. And in exact conformity to this statement, it is still worthy of further notice, that when JESUS himself, in the days of his flesh, was speaking on the same subject, and calling himself the shepherd, and his Church his sheep, he told his disciples, which were all Jews, that *he had other sheep, which were not of this fold. Them also, (said the LORD,) I must bring, and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.* See John 10:16 and Commentary upon it.

Having taken this scriptural view of the Church of CHRIST, and, (as I venture to believe,) having clearly shewn, that that Church, formed in the divine mind before all worlds, was wholly one, and but one; though, in the after days of the time-state of the Church, was branched out into those two distinct families of Jew and Gentile; we shall now be the better prepared to enter into a proper apprehension of the subject, in what is related in this chapter, concerning the conversion of *Cornelius*, a Gentile, to the faith in CHRIST.

It will be recollected then, that the whole Jewish nation, were, to a man, brought up in those high notions, that as the *Messiah*, when he came, was to spring from the stock of *Abraham*, he would only come for the deliverance of *Israel*, and all the nations of the earth were uninterested in his mission; hence, they expected him only in this character. And all the Apostles were as deeply tinctured with those opinions, as any of their country men. And, although, in the farewell commission which the LORD JESUS gave to his Apostles, he

commanded them, that as soon as they were endued with power from on high, they should *go in to all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature*: Mark 16:15. yet, so little did they apprehend our LORD's meaning, and so riveted were they in the same Jewish principles, of the LORD's grace only to Israel, that when they attended JESUS on the Mount at his ascension, they put the question to CHRIST, LORD! *wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?* Acts 1:6.

It should seem by the circumstances related in this Chapter, nothing short of a vision from heaven to *Peter*, and accompanied at the same time, with the message of an angel, and a command of the HOLY GHOST, to him to obey, would have been competent to remove those narrow conceits from *Peter's* mind: and to teach him, and all the Jewish Church through him, that GOD *had granted to the Gentiles*, as well as to the Jews, *repentance unto life*, Acts 11:2

In the history of *Cornelius*, as related in this Chapter, the LORD was pleased to set forth this precious doctrine. This man, we are told, was a *Centurion*; that is, a Roman officer, commanding an hundred men. His character also is given. He was *a devout man, and one that feared GOD with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to GOD continually*. That is, he was a Proselyte of the Gate so called. He followed the stated hours of prayer, observed by the Jews, and feared the GOD of *Israel*. And to the love of GOD, as far as his knowledge led him, he added the love of man; and was of good report in the neighbourhood where he lived, for his alms, deeds, and charity. So that it appears, he was what the world would call a good man. And very certain it is, that the world at large would be a far different world

from what it is, if it was composed of such characters. Happy would it be, for the peace and welfare of mankind, if we could look round, and behold men like *Cornelius*, in every neighbourhood. But with all these amiable qualities, as they relate to the intercourse with men, they fall short of what is essential to a friendship with GOD, And it should seem, that the LORD designed, in making choice of this very man, by way of declaring the necessity of salvation, plainly and decidedly to shew, that these things do not stand in account before GOD; and that without CHRIST, he must have perished everlastingly.

To accomplish this purpose, and to bring this honest Centurion into the way of learning by outward means, the knowledge of CHRIST, he is favored with a vision; and directions are given to him where to send, and from whom he should learn *words, whereby he, and all his household should be saved*, Acts 11:14. I do not think it needful to dwell upon the particulars either of *Cornelius's* vision, or that of *Peter*. In the beautiful simplicity in which they are related in this Chapter, every circumstance is very plain and obvious. I rather wish to direct the Reader's attention to some of the striking things which arise out of the whole subject.

If I detain the Reader with a single remark on the vision of *Cornelius*, it shall only be to observe, the particularity of the hour; namely, the ninth hour: that is, three of the clock in the afternoon. That memorable, blessed, precious hour, to which every evening sacrifice, under the law, had respect. The hour, on which the LORD JESUS died on the cross: and by that *one offering of himself once offered, perfected for ever them that*

are sanctified, Hebrews 10:14. See Exodus 12:6; 1 Kings 18:36; Daniel 9:21; Matthew 27:45-46; Hebrews 10:10.

And if I venture to offer a single remark on visions in general, it shall be only to observe, from the fear with which it is here said that *Cornelius* looked on the angel; what a natural disposition there is in every man of flesh and blood, to shrink at the supposed sight of what as a spirit. We are so much occupied with earth, and earthly concerns, that a messenger from heaven, even though on an errand of mercy, like this angel to *Cornelius*, makes the heart draw back. And yet every child of GOD is in the habit, more or less, of daily, yea, hourly conversing at the throne of grace, with the LORD JESUS: and is not this a spiritual Communion and fellowship? 1 John 1:3. Wherefore then should the mind be appalled, in the apprehension of the beloved object becoming visible? Why should any, who know the LORD, and love the LORD, and by grace and faith, keep up an holy acquaintance with the LORD, at his mercy seat, feel a somewhat of reluctancy in the idea of sight? I humbly ask the question, but speak not confidently, when I say, would it not be well in the LORD'S redeemed ones, and to whom JESUS is dear, to familiarize these thoughts? Do I not know, that ere long, I shall be called upon to embark at once into the world of spirits, when my spirit shall be disembodied? And would it not be right now, and before that hour comes, (which cannot be far off, and may be near indeed,) to be sometimes walking as on the confines of the eternal world, and by faith communing with those spiritual objects which at death we instantly meet Yea, is it not certain, that we are now surrounded by them in their ministry and services; and are nearer to them, and they to us, than we are

conscious? See Kings 6:16-17; Psalm 34:7; Daniel 6:22; Hebrews 1:14.

ACTS 10:17-33

Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, (18) And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. (19) While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. (20) Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them. (21) Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? (22) And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by a holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. (23) Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. (24) And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends. (25) And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. (26) But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man. (27) And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. (28) And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. (29) Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me? (30) And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, (31) And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. (32) Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. (33) Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and

thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

If I detain the Reader at these verses, it is but to call upon him to remark with me, the gracious manifestation of GOD the HOLY GHOST, *in* speaking to *Peter*. I never can say enough to myself nor to the Reader, in calling the attention of both to what we are so apt to over-look; the unceasing office of GOD the SPIRIT, in his Almighty ministry in the Church. Most certain it is, that from the beginning, when the Church was formed, the HOLY GHOST presided over it. He that anointed the glorious Head, anointed all his members, John 3:34; Ephesians 4:7; Psalm 45:7. All the services of the Old Testament dispensation, as types and shadows of CHRIST, were of his appointing, Hebrews 9:8. All the Prophets were sanctified and ordained by him, Isaiah 6:8-9; Jeremiah 1:5; Ezekiel 2:2; 1 Peter 1:10-11. All the Apostles from him received the unction of their Apostleship, John 7:39; Luke 24:49; John 14:26; Acts 1:5; Acts 2:1-4. And without the LORD the SPIRIT ordains ministers to his service, in all ages of the Church, vain are the laying on of the hands of men. Acts 19:1-6; Acts 20:28. It is very blessed to observe in this scripture, the LORD the SPIRIT speaking to *Peter*, See also Acts 13:2-4; Acts 16:6-7; 1 Timothy 4:1. And I hope the Reader, from such palpable evidences to this great and leading truth of the Scriptures, will not fail to grant it due attention. Let him remember, that *speaking*, and *sending*, are personal acts, such as define real personal Being. And let him remember also, that when the HOLY GHOST commanded *Peter* to go with the messengers of *Cornelius*, saying, *I have sent them*; and when *Cornelius* said to *Peter*: *Thou hast done well that thou art come; now*

therefore all we are here present before GOD, to hear all things that are commanded thee of GOD : the service Peter was then called to, was GOD's service, and by GOD's command; and consequently this Scripture proves, the Person, GODHEAD, and Ministry, of GOD the HOLY GHOST.

ACTS 10:34-43

Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: (35) But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. (36) The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) (37) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; (38) How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. (39) And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: (40) Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; (41) Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. (42) And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. (43) To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

I beg the Reader's attention in a very particular manner, to the opening of this Scriptural sermon of the Apostles, as well as to the whole subject contained in it. Never, I believe, hath there been any part of the word of GOD twisted to speak the very reverse of what the Apostle meant, more than in this verse ; and therefore it merits the closer attention.

The advocates for a general inoffensiveness of conduct, as, in their view, the first and only qualifications, for an appearance

before GOD, both here and hereafter; are continually endeavouring to lessen the infinite importance of redemption by CHRIST, with harping upon this string, that GOD *is no respecter of persons*; and that it matters not, how men live, provided they live up to the light of nature, and the reason that is in them; *for in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him*. Whereas, both *Peter's* sermon, and *Peter's* journey to *Cornelius*, testified the very reverse of this interpretation of *Peter's* words. In the instance of this Gentile, the LORD decidedly declared, that neither his devotion, nor his charity, were of any account, in a way of justification before GOD: and that without a change of heart, in *repentance toward GOD and faith in the LORD JESUS CHRIST*, he could not be saved. Else wherefore the expense of a vision to send men to *Peter*, to tell him *words, whereby he and his might be saved*? Wherefore *Peter*, receiving also the ministry of a vision, and a special command from GOD the HOLY GHOST, to go to *Cornelius*, at such a distance, had *Cornelius* been in a salvable state before?

Let it be supposed, for argument's sake, that this honest Gentile had entertained such sentiments as these despisers of the Person and work of CHRIST do entertain; who, from being unacquainted with the plague of their own heart, think lightly of CHRIST, and his salvation: and when the angel had delivered his message of sending to call *Peter*, he had said, wherefore send for *Peter*? I am serving GOD to the best of my power. I do no wrong. I injure no one. I give much alms; and pray continually. I need no more. What can we reasonably conclude would have been the consequence? Would not the LORD's displeasure have been most justly called forth against

such contumacy? Mistake me not. I am not for a moment supposing, *Cornelius* as at all liable *to* fall into such a temptation of arrogancy and presumption. He was better taught. The LORD, which gave him instruction to send for *Peter*, had at the same time inclined his heart to obey. But I am simply stating the case, in order to shew more pointedly the dangerous situation of those, who wrest the Scriptures of GOD to speak the reverse of what those Scriptures mean; and act upon that perversion. Very awful must it be in all who reject the council of GOD against their own souls, who rest satisfied with a general inoffensiveness of conduct, and live, and die, uninterested in the great salvation of the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

And if *Peter* had not the most distant idea of such a perversion of words, when he thus delivered himself, and which his journey to *Caesarea* most plainly proves; what did the Apostle mean, when he said: *Of a truth, I perceive, that GOD is no respecter of persons: but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him?* Nothing can be more evident, than that *Peter* meant to say, that all his Jewish prejudices were done away. He now discovered, what he knew not before, that the Jew and the Gentile as such, were equally the objects of divine favor in CHRIST. And, under these impressions, he hesitated not to declare openly the convictions of his mind; that the great redemption by CHRIST was not limited to the Jew; but his people, were equally to be found, among the other nations of the earth. Hence he exclaimed, *GOD is no respecter of persons.* An expression similar to that of *Paul*, Galatians 1:6. *GOD accepteth no man's person:* meaning the same in both;

that there is nothing in the person of any man, whether Jew or Gentile, to find respect, or acceptation; for both are only in CHRIST. *He hath made us accepted in the beloved*, saith the Church, Ephesians. 1:6.

And, to the same amount *Paul* speaks, when, under the influence of divine teaching, he crieth out: *Is he the GOD of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes! of the Gentiles also. Seeing, it is One GOD which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith*, Romans 3:29-30. GOD is no respecter of persons in *Paul's* view, no more than in *Peter's*. The GOD of the Jew, is the GOD of the Gentile, not only in nature and providence, but in grace and glory. GOD was in Covenant in CHRIST for his Gentile Church as well as his Jewish Church, before the Covenant of the law given by *Moses on Mount Sinai*: before the Covenant of Circumcision given to *Abraham* after the flood: before the Covenant transaction with *Noah*, before the flood: before the Covenant of promise, made at the fall, *in the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head*: yea, before the foundation of the earth was laid. This is proved to us in what hath been before remarked, in the beginning of the observations in this Chapter. And the sending *Peter* to *Cornelius*, and the call of all the Church of the Gentiles in all ages, proves the same. The whole Church, both Gentile and Jew, were from all eternity, chosen in CHRIST; and in the time-state of the Church, all are called in CHRIST, adopted in CHRIST, justified in CHRIST, sanctified in CHRIST, and will be glorified in CHRIST, when they are all brought home from their present time-state on earth, to their eternal state in heaven. And all these blessings are the sole result of free, sovereign,

and unconditional grace; *Seeing it is One* GOD existing in a threefold[96] character of Persons, *which shall justify*; and justify in the same way, and by the same cause: not from human merit, but divine mercy; not from man's deserving, but GOD's free grace; the whole Church of his love, *whether they be Jew or Gentile; whether they be bond or free*. And this justification hath nothing in it derived from the Church; for it is wholly of GOD, *The circumcision of the Jew*, doth not in the least promote it; neither *the uncircumcision of the Gentile*, retard. *All the sufficiency is of GOD*. And the enjoyment *by faith* in the Jew, or *through faith* of the Gentile, is the same. The glorious comprehensive source of all justification, is as the Apostle closed his sermon, with observing, *as all the Prophets witness that it is through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins*. See Commentary, Acts 13:39.

ACTS 10:44-48

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. (45) And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. (46) For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, (47) Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? (48) And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Think, Reader, what blessed seasons those were, when GOD the SPIRIT sent his word, and owned that word, and crowned the labors of his servants in that word, with the graces of his holy unction! What refreshment must it have been, both to the LORD's servants, and the LORD's people, when while the

one was speaking, the HOLY GHOST was descending upon the other, and both enjoying the presence and grace of the LORD JESUS in the heart. Almighty LORD of thy Church! do thou in the present hour manifest, that both the work, and the glory is thine. And when thou art mercifully pleased to send thy word to thy people, or to bring thy people to thy word; grant that *the glorious Gospel of the ever blessed GOD, may indeed be preached with the HOLY GHOST sent down from heaven!* 1 Peter 1:12.

REFLECTIONS

READER! in the perusal of this blessed Chapter, let us pass by every lesser consideration, to attend to the one great and glorious truth, taught in it, and by it, how GOD the SPIRIT watches over, and is carrying on all the vast designs of his Almighty ministry! How blessedly hath the LORD here taught, that the Jewish and Gentile Church is but one: both branches equally dear to all the Persons of the GODHEAD, and equally calling forth the joint love, grace, and mercy, of FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, And Reader! let not you and I forget, how infinitely important in the sight of JEHOVAH, is the work of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, in his mediator-character; that all the devotion of this honest Centurion towards GOD, and his conscientious dealings with men, would not have procured him salvation. Oh! the preciousness of JESUS CHRIST.

Let all humble waiters upon the LORD, take courage from the grace manifested in this sweet history. *The LORD knoweth them that are his.* And JESUS will call his redeemed from all places of the earth, where they have been scattered *in the cloudy and dark day.* When *the LORD writeth up his people,*

even *Caesarea* will have her children, like *Cornelius*, to be numbered.

Blessed SPIRIT of all truth! in all ages thou hast manifested thy saving power. Do thou be pleased, O LORD, from the water of regeneration, until grace is consummated in glory, to carry on thy work with power in the heart of thy redeemed, until thou hast brought the nations of CHRIST'S heritage to thy sceptre; and made every knee of the LORD'S people to bend to CHRIST'S name, and *every tongue to confess that JESUS is LORD to the glory of GOD the FATHER!* Amen.

CHAPTER 11

CONTENTS

The tidings of Cornelius's Conversion are communicated to the Church Jerusalem. Peter is at first reprov'd for going to Cornelius; but: afterwards the Apostles glorify GOD for the Mercy. Some Account of Barnabas.

ACTS 11:1-18

And the apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. (2) And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, (3) Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. (4) But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying, (5) I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: (6) Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. (7) And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. (8) But I said,

Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. (9) But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. (10) And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven. (11) And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesarea unto me. (12) And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house: (13) And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; (14) Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. (15) And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. (16) Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. (17) Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? (18) When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

It will not be necessary to detain the Reader long over these verses, seeing they are but a recapitulation of what passed on the occasion of *Cornelius's* conversion, and are contained in the preceding Chapter, What I would chiefly request might be noticed, is, the conduct of the Church, in reproving *Peter*; and the very gracious behavior of the Apostle, in his modest defense of himself, in answer. Both are very instructive. The Apostles and Brethren which were in *Judea*, seem to have manifested a different conduct, upon a former occasion, when tidings was brought to them, that *Samaria* had received the word of God: for they sent upon that account, *Peter* and *John* to them, by way of comfort and confirmation. See Acts 8:14-15. But here the reverse seems to have actuated them. It serves to teach us, how improper all hasty judgments are.

The best of men, and the best of Churches, and in the best of times, are but *men of like passions with ourselves*. It is blessed to know it. And it is blessed to be humbled under a sense of it. Nothing more sweetly and powerfully preacheth CHRIST, than when taught our nothingness without him.

What a beautiful example *Peter* holds forth, both to ministers and people, in the quietness and meekness of mind, he manifested to the reproaches, with which he was first received by the Church, on his return. *Caesarea* from *Jerusalem* was little short of seventy-five miles. And it was a sad reception, which they gave him in their reproof when he went up from the house of *Cornelius* to *Jerusalem*, to inform the Church of what had happened. *Peter* knew who had sent him. And he was conscious of the LORD's blessing upon his labors. These things, no doubt, fortified his mind, and enabled him to bear all their reproaches. The LORD's faithful people may, and ought to learn from hence, that GOD's services, when they are employed in them by Him, and blessed in them by Him, will be sure to call forth the displeasure of men; yea, even the LORD's own people, (as was the case here,) shall sometimes be prompted by the enemy, to afflict their brethren, ignorant of what they do. Sometimes our false misconception of things, sometimes our judging by report too hastily; and sometimes, and perhaps not unfrequently, from the remains of indwelling corruption, jealousies creep in our hearts, and we feel somewhat which ought not to be, rising there. The Church complained of it, when she said; *my mother's children were angry with me*, Song of Solomon 1:6. Reader! if you and I know with *Paul*, the plague of our own hearts; and that even in ourselves corruptions arise, which

war against the soul and are bringing us into captivity, into the law of sin which is in our members; how can we wonder that others, who neither know our motives of conduct, nor the leadings of them, should sometimes reproach us?

And while such views of the common infirmity of nature, will, under grace, tend to soften the minds of the LORD'S people, and suppress anger at any of their little unkind misconstruction of conduct when we are conscious we have not merited their displeasure; such will in an eminent degree under the LORD, preserve faithful ministers of JESUS, as *Peter*, in the instance before us, *in patience to possess their souls*, when the world, or still more the mistaken men in the Church, come forth to reprove them. To shew displeasure because we know ourselves to be right, is not the plan to correct them that are wrong. It is rather *turning that which is lame out of the way*. How much better, *like* the Apostle, in brotherly affection to submit as he did, the point to their cool decision: and how soon were their tempers changed, and the LORD glorified! This is what the Apostle Paul called, *in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves*. For, said he, *the servant of the LORD must not strive, but be gentle unto all men: and an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*, 1 Timothy 4:12.

ACTS 11:19-24

Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. (20) And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. (21) And the hand of the Lord was with them:

and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. (22) Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. (23) Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. (24) For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

I beg the Reader to notice, how the LORD overruled the persecution which arose at *Jerusalem*, in the death of *Stephen*, and other faithful servants to the LORD; to minister to his glory, in scattering his people far and near to spread the Gospel. How little are the enemies of the cross aware, how greatly their malice sometimes turns out, to the furtherance of *the truth, as it is in JESUS!* How often they become thereby, the unwilling instruments, in promoting the very reverse of what they intend. So it was here: so is it now; and so the LORD will for ever make it, as long as the present-time-state of the Church shall remain. And I hope the Reader will not pass away from that precious verse, which speaks of the hand of the LORD being with them, until that he hath first observed the blessedness of the thing itself, and the blessings which are said to have followed.

I admire the character given of *Barnabas*. It is but short, though sweet. *A good man, and full of the HOLY GHOST!* What could be said more? And observe what holy joy it opened in his soul, when he had seen the LORD's work, in the hearts of the LORD's people. For, in *the great number* which are said to have believed, *Barnabas* beheld some of the same blessed effects discovering themselves in the people, which he felt in his own experience. For where GOD the SPIRIT dwells, all the

properties of regenerating, renewing, illuminating, converting, and confirming grace, cannot but abound.

And there is a very great sweetness in this exhortation of the Apostle, which he gave them, that *with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the LORD*, He used the exhortation, but he was directing their minds to look unto the LORD for the accomplishment. *Hold thou me up*, (said one of old,) *and I shall be safe. Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee!* Reader! it is blessed, when at any time we receive the LORD's commands, to be looking to the LORD for grace to follow them. *I shall run* (said the same holy saint I just now quoted,) *the way of thy commandments; when thou hast set my heart at liberty*. Here is the strength for performance. And when we are enabled to accept the LORD's biddings, as enablings! oh! how sweet and precious are all the LORD's ways to his people, Psalm 119:32. Reader! do not dismiss this view of *Barnabas*, and his exhortation, before that you have first enquired at the heart, whether you have followed it. No man can cleave unto the LORD, until he knows the LORD. And if we truly know the LORD, we shall know ourselves also: and in that knowledge, both of our nothingness, and CHRIST'S all sufficiency, the tendency of the soul will be, to cleave unto him. *They that know thy name will put their trust in thee*. No man can trust, or cleave to, an unknown GOD, John 4:10; Psalm 9:10.

And it will be among the easiest of all things, to discover whether we cleave to the LORD by the conscious strength and help we derive from the LORD. The tenderest plants in nature are not more feeble, when they throw their blanches round some statelier tree for support, as the ivy to the oak, than a child of GOD, which cleaves to CHRIST, and lays hold of JESUS,

as his whole security. And how sweet in confirmation is that Scripture. *The eternal GOD is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms*, Deuteronomy 33:27. Reader! it will be well for you and me, if while we admire, as we cannot but admire, this interesting account of *Barnabas*, we can trace somewhat of the same spirit which marked his life, in our own. *Moses*, the man of GOD, enjoined the same motive to *Israel* for cleaving to the LORD, because (said he,) *he is your life*, Deuteronomy 30:20.

ACTS 11:25-26

Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: (26) And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

As the HOLY GHOST hath been pleased to have it recorded, where the honored spot was, from whence the LORD'S family first derived the high privilege of being called *Christians*, I think it well merits our attention. It should seem, that before, and about this period, the faithful in CHRIST JESUS, were variously distinguished in names, who spake of them in derision, called them *Nazarenes*, *Galileans*, men *who trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful*: Acts 16:20-21. *who have turned the world upside down*: Acts 17:21, and, as they called *Paul*, a *pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes*: Acts 14:5. so no doubt the whole community were considered the same. And, whether the name of *Christians* was first given to them by their enemies, or by friends, is not said, though I confess to me it appears, as though it evidently came from the LORD. But one thing is

certain, the scoffer used it in reproach. And for many generations after, as well as then in *Antioch*, the foes to the cross considered nothing more opprobrious, than when they called a man, Christian. *Paul* said for himself and companions, that they were esteemed *the filth and off-scouring of all things*, 1 Corinthians 4:13.

I have already said, that to me, I confess, it appears to have come immediately from the LORD. And my reasons are these. It was the LORD'S promise, that when the *Gentiles should see CHRIST'S righteousness, and all kings his glory*, that then the Church *should be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD should name*, Isaiah 62:2; Isaiah 65:15. And the name itself doth not simply mean a *follower* of CHRIST, or one professing CHRIST, (though the enemies of CHRIST, perhaps mean no other, when they call the LORD'S people *Christians*;) but the name means *anointed ones*. Thus in that beautiful passage of the prophet, where CHRIST is represented as *going forth for the salvation of his people*, it is added, *even for salvation with thine anointed*, Habakkuk 3:13. That this passage refers to CHRIST, is beyond all dispute, for this *going forth* can mean no other, and so *Micah* describes CHRIST, whose *goings forth have been from of old from everlasting*, Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:6. And the Church, is specially, and properly, CHRIST'S people. In proof, see Psalm 110:3; Matthew 1:21; John 17:6. And when it is said by *Habakkuk*, that the LORD went forth for salvation with his *anointed*; though the word is in the singular, yet it is put as meaning the whole body. In a similar passage in *Zechariah*, the word to the same purport is plural. These are the *two anointed ones that stand by the LORD of the whole earth*, Zechariah 4:14. And if, as

may be supposed, (though I presume not to speak decidedly,) those *two* mean the LORD's witnesses, *Jew* and *Gentile*, these correspond to the anointing of CHRIST'S Church, which is but one and the same, Song of Solomon 6:9; John 10:16; Revelation 11:3-4. Some indeed render the words of the Prophet, when he saith, thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed, even for salvation for thy CHRIST'S, that is the same word *anointed*, for CHRIST means anointed. So much for the name.

I must not dismiss the subject of the Church being first called Christians at *Antioch*, without remarking further, that supposing, (as I have ventured to state, the hand of the LORD was in the appointment, what a singular mercy it was, that from such a place, and at such a time, the LORD should mark his family. *Antioch* was the chief city of *Syria*. It was the capital of *Antiochus*, and probably called after his name. He had been among the most bitter foes of GOD'S Church. Here then in this man's empire, and in his chief city, the LORD will first call his people by his own most holy name. Reader! remember what JESUS said to *Peter* in relation to the building of his Church *upon this rock*, meaning himself, *will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*, Matthew 16:18. And is it not so now? yea, hath it not been the same in all ages? Psalm 2 throughout. Reader! depend upon it, the truths of our GOD were never more opposed than in the present hour. I mean the pure, distinguishing truths, which peculiarly belong to the Gospel. Men may be called *Christians*, yea, indeed, they are called so, because they are born under the meridian of Christianity. And, for the same reason, the same men had they been born in *Turkey*, would

have been called *Mohammedans*. But a man must be *new-horn* to be really and truly a Christian, as those at *Antioch* were, when branded by the carnal at that place, with the name of Christian. And if you, my brother, are truly a Christian, an anointed one in CHRIST by regeneration, and know, as you cannot then but know by that blessed work of the HOLY GHOST wrought in you, your union with CHRIST and communion in all that belongs to CHRIST'S being justified wholly *by* Him, sanctified *in* Him, and professing before all the world, that your everlasting All depends *upon* Him; an open profession of these glorious truths, and a corresponding conduct in life and conversation, answering to the same, will bring upon you reproach as much as true believers in CHRIST did the saints of old at this famous city, when *the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch*. The offence of the cross hath never ceased. And unless men temporize, and give in to the conformity of the times, *now*, as much as *then*, *they who will live godly in CHRIST JESUS, must suffer persecution*, 2 Timothy 3:19. There is a fashionable gospel in the present day, which all the world may follow, and yet escape reproach. But none who *love the LORD JESUS CHRIST in sincerity and truth*, will go free. Reader! it will be your province of duty, now I have performed mine on this subject, to enquire after the real cause for which you are called Christian. And I shall leave the subject with you, only first requesting you to consult those two striking Scriptures of the LORD JESUS on the point, as both addressed to Pharisees, Luke 16:14-15 and John 3:3.

ACTS 11:27-30

And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.
(28) And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and

signified by the spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. (29) Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea: (30) Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

The Prophets here spoken of, according to the original word made use of to call them by, were men *divinely warned*. Probably they were certain eminent disciples, who though not called to the Apostolic office, yet acted under them in the ministry of the word. We read of different orders in the Church, 1 Corinthians 12:28. And in relation to the purport of their prophecy, in the expectation of dearth; this seems to have been in great grace and mercy, given them from the LORD. Many such things have taken place from the watchful care of the LORD, in various ages, even down to modern times of the Church. And it is a truth which ought to be always kept in view: the LORD is as much a GOD of providence, as He is the GOD of grace, to his people. That sweet promise, concerning the SPIRIT of truth, shewing his Church things to come; may be, and ought to be, applied to all cases of his redeemed, in all their warfare, John 16:13. This famine gave occasion for the exercise of the love, and alms-giving of the Church. Thus the LORD overrules circumstances of seeming evil to real good; and in the diversities of character, and station, affords opportunity for calling into exercise, the various graces of the HOLY SPIRIT.

REFLECTIONS

I would ponder well the several weighty things contained in this Chapter, and chiefly with an eye to behold the gracious

tendencies of GOD the SPIRIT, watching over his Church and people. It is really wonderful when we trace how the LORD carried on the ministry of his sacred word, amidst all the oppositions, not only against the wickedness of the enemy, but the mistaken weakness of friends. Who could have thought, that after CHRIST'S own direction to his Apostles, to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature; those very Apostles should have been so prejudiced in Jewish notions, as to feel displeasure, when that Gospel was preached by *Peter*, and owned of GOD. But, Reader! what is human nature, in its highest attainments!

My soul! ponder that worthy name by which thou art called; and see amidst the undistinguished mass of the Christian world, falsely so, called, what distinguishing part is in it, known by thee, and by which thou canst prove thy real title. For as he is not a Jew, that is one outwardly: so neither can he be a Christian, that is not one inwardly. Regeneration it is, which gives the just claim. And this is in the heart. The name *first* began at *Antioch*, Antioch is now no more. And where will be the *last* place where this holy name will be truly known? It is a solemn question. But what a tremendous scripture is that of CHRIST'S, and which must be assuredly fulfilled: *Many will say to me in that day: LORD, LORD, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils; and in thy name done many wonderful works. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity.*

CHAPTER 12

CONTENTS

Herod persecutes the Church. James is' killed by him, and Peter put into Prison. An Angel of the LORD opens the Prison Doors, and delivers him. Herod's awful Death.

ACTS 12:1-3

Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. (2) And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. (3) And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

If the Reader at the opening of this Chapter, will consult the *Poor Man's Commentary* on Matthew 2:19; he will there observe, that this *Herod* was the *fourth* of that name, whose awful histories are shortly mentioned in the word of GOD. Not with a view to record their names, but their infamy. And, but for the carrying on the history of the Church, would not have been known even by name, in the present hour, but to a very few, if any. *Their memorial is perished with them*, Psalm 9:6. He was deputy king, under *Claudius Caesar*, Emperor of *Rome*. This *James*, whom *Herod* killed, was one of the sons of *Zebedee*, concerning whom the LORD JESUS foretold, of his being baptized with his baptism, Matthew 20:22. The LORD hath given in a single line the infamy of Herod's character. He had killed *James*; and because *he saw it pleased the Jews*, he would have killed *Peter* also. So that this thirsting for blood, was not even pretended to be on the least ground of justice, but to please blood-thirsty men, like himself. How very pointed are the words of the HOLY GHOST, concerning the sure destruction of such characters. *Whose judgment now of a*

long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not!
2 Peter 2:3.

ACTS 12:4-5

And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. (5) Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

The days of unleavened bread mean the feast of the Passover; and as a great number of Jews were of course come up *at Jerusalem* on this occasion, *Herod* thought this a fine opportunity to gratify that people with the spectacle of the murder of *Peter*; and therefore he intended, as soon as their religious ceremonies were over, the Apostle should be brought forth. And thus this time-serving king was filling up the measure of his iniquity, Genesis 15:16.

I pray the Reader to be very particular in observing, what is said of the unceasing prayer of the Church, for the preservation of *Peter*, The words in the margin of the Bible are: *instant and earnest prayer* was made without ceasing. An holy importunity with the LORD, such as would take no denial. Such as *Jacob* himself the father of all the praying seed of *Israel* used, when it is said, that *he wept and made supplication unto him*, Hosea 12:4. Weeping, and then praying; and then at it again: wrestling again, with tears and prayers; and as one that was determined never to give over, until he obtained as at length he did obtain the object he desired. See the whole history, Gen 32:24 &c. And it is worthy remark, the light in which the LORD regards such holy pleaders. He calls them *Recorders*; for so the word *Mazkir*

means: Isaiah 62:6-7. I beg the Reader to turn to the passage. He will find in the margin of his Bible, that to the LORD'S *watchmen*, whom he hath commanded never to hold their peace, day nor night, the LORD saith; Ye that are the LORD'S *remembrancers*, keep not silence; and give *him no silence*, until he hath established, and made Jerusalem a praise in the earth. And then follows the LORD'S Oath. —I entreat the Reader to ponder this sweet Scripture well. And I entreat him to seek instruction from the LORD the SPIRIT, to a right apprehension of it. And when he hath thus done, I would ask him the question, (I do not decide,) whether there is not in the whole GOD the FATHER'S oath and promise: Hebrews 6:17-18. GOD the SON'S finished salvation and intercession: (for both are implied in all real prayer): 1 John 2:1-2, and GOD the SPIRIT'S grace and supplication, as a spirit of both, poured out to lead the praying seed of *Jacob* to prayer, and help them in it; all included in this sweet portion, Zechariah 12:10; Romans 8:26.

We that live in the present cold, prayerless generation, (and as it is to be feared, too often satisfy ourselves with heartless forms,) by reason of such prison frames as we pray in, can hardly figure to ourselves an idea of the holy importunity of those holy men of old. But were the LORD to bring on the Church, as in those days, an awful persecution like this of *Herod*, the faithful in CHRIST, would soon learn, in what soul-feeling prayer consisted.

ACTS 12:6-10

And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. (7) And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined

in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. (8) And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. (9) And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. (10) When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

I need not attempt a comment where every word is so very plain? And sure I am, the simplicity of the history as here related, would lose its beauty, if I were to alter it by a needless explanation. But, I would observe, that the situation of *Peter* in this prison, hath been, and perhaps not unaptly considered, (besides its real history,) as a lively representation of the child of GOD before his conversion, when in the prison of sin and Satan. Like *Peter* he may be truly said to be *sleeping between two soldiers*; both law and justice *bound* with the two chains of sin and death; and the keepers, Satan and his hellish crew, before the door guarding their *lawful* prisoner. Lawful, it may be truly called; for he hath made our whole nature his lawful captive, by reason of our original and actual transgressions. *For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage*, 2 Peter 2:19. And hence that blessed question of the LORD, Isaiah 49:24-26,

The Angel of the LORD delivering *Peter* from the prison is like the LORD the SPIRIT by regeneration, rousing a sinner from the slumber of death in sin: for before this glorious act is wrought, every child of GOD is sleeping in sin; yea, *dead in*

trespasses and sins, Ephesians 2:1. But when the LORD the SPIRIT gives life to the soul, and he that was dead in sin, is made life in CHRIST; all chains fall from the poor sinner: for the SON of GOD *having made him free, he shall be free indeed*. He is at once *delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of GOD's dear SON*, John 8:36; Colossians 1:13. And such is the mighty change wrought in his heart by grace, that, like *Peter*, the whole appears too good to be true, and for a while seems to be but a vision. He will indeed, being so enabled by the LORD, gird himself with strength in the LORD; bind on the garments of salvation, and his feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace: he will follow the LORD in the regeneration, through both the wards of providence, and grace; until he cometh to the iron gate of death, which leadeth to *the city, and which hath foundations whose builder and maker is GOD*. But here the subject varieth. For forth with the angel departed from *Peter*. But JESUS never departs from his redeemed; for all his delivered captives enter with him into the holy city, and abide with him for ever.

ACTS 12:11-17

And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. (12) And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. (13) And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. (14) And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. (15) And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. (16) But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they

were astonished. (17) But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

This interview must have been particularly interesting. The LORD which brought *Peter* from the prison, no doubt directed his steps to the house of *Mary* the mother of *Mark*. See Colossians 4:10. Here he found many of the Church at prayer for him (see Acts 12:5). The knocking at such an hour, and at such a time, as the night before the intended execution of *Peter*, must have excited wonderful apprehensions. Who shall describe what the different party felt? It seems they were all panic struck; for none ventured to go to the gate. At length a damsel went, perhaps chosen for this purpose, that whoever it was knocking, the voice of a mere child, might not convey an idea, that there was any fear within. Ye people of GOD! judge ye, for I cannot explain, how these things, and similar ones, sometimes operate in life. Oh! what a world of wonders will be explained at the great day of account! The name of *Rhoda*, which signifies *Rose*, would not have been memorable but from this circumstance. The situation of *Peter*, however, compelled him to be importunate. And when at length they opened the door, (for it should seem that the whole party went to do it,) what surprise it must have occasioned !

But, Reader! the grand point remains to be considered. Do not overlook, the blessed answers to prayer in *Peter's* deliverance. So gracious, so abundantly gracious was the LORD in this event, that they who were so earnest in prayers, did not believe the thing was done, when answers came to

their prayers: so that the LORD far exceeded all their expectations. And oh! how often, both before and since, hath the LORD done so by all his people! See a beautiful proof of it in the Church of old, Psalm 126 throughout.

ACTS 12:18-20

Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter. (19) And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and there abode. (20) And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country.

It is a question, more of curiosity than usefulness, where *Peter* went after he left the house of *Mary*, and where he secreted himself. It is enough for the Church to discover the LORD's gracious hand in delivering him at that time from *Herod*, and the expectation of the Jews. The LORD had other work for his servant to accomplish. But when that was over, *Peter*, like other men, proved to be vulnerable, 2 Peter 1:4.

ACTS 12:21-23

And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. (22) And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. (23) And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

Here we arrive at the close of *Herod's* pomp, in which we behold the sure end of iniquity. We see that in the very moment of all his pomp, and earthly grandeur, an Angel of GOD smiting the monster to the earth. And to distinguish him

yet more, as one execrated both by GOD and man, he was eaten of worms, even before his death. It is the common sentence on human nature, by reason of sin, to return to the dust, out of which man was taken. But this hater of GOD, and persecutor of his people, shall have an end yet more despicable, and loathsome. He shall be eaten of worms while alive; a prelude to the everlasting devouring by that worm which dieth not, and in *that fire which shall not be quenched*. And if we may credit profane history, it is remarkable how many tyrants have died this death!

ACTS 12:24-25

But the word of God grew and multiplied. (25) And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

What a sweet relief to the mind from the perusal of the foregoing account, in the awful death of the Reprobate, is the relation here made, of the progress, and blessedness of the Church. Yes! thou dearest JESUS! thy Church must stand: and *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it'*

REFLECTIONS

READER! let not you and I overlook the wonderful success of prayer, in the case of *Peter*, as related in this Chapter. Oh! what cannot prayer accomplish, when awakened by the SPIRIT of the LORD? And let us not fail to remark, how very near sometimes the LORD permits the enemy to approach, and the apprehensions of his people to be exercised, before the LORD vouchsafeth his answer to prayer. The night was advanced, and the morning hastening on, which was to end the life of *Peter*, before that the prayers for the Apostle's deliverance

were answered. So is it frequently with the Church. But there *is a time to favor Zion*. And that time, shall not fully run out, before the LORD'S hour is come. Oh! the wonders of the LORD'S timing; and the LORD'S giving deliverance. And, oh! the exercises of the LORD'S people, thereby to their good. In every one the LORD speaks; *I the LORD teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go!*

What a lesson is here read, to the great and the mighty of the earth, of such as are enemies to GOD, and his CHRIST. *Oh! how suddenly do they consume, perish, and come to a fearful end!* Behold in *Herod*, the sad representation. It is the shout of a god, said the mistaken multitude. And before the shout was hardly ended, he shrieked, though unheard by them, the first shriek of his in hell. What a striking, but just account, the word of GOD gives, of such awful characters, *Like Sheep*, (said the Psalmist,) *they are laid in the grave: death shall feed on them, and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning: and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling. He shall go to the generation of his fathers: they shall never see light.* And where is that? Nay, where is it not? *Peter* saith; *to the spirits which are in prison*. And if they never see light, where can that be but hell? *A land of darkness*, as *Job* saith; *as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order; and where the light is as darkness*. Oh! for grace to know distinguishing grace, and to say with the same Psalmist: *But GOD will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for he shall receive me.*

CHAPTER 13

CONTENTS

The HOLY GHOST specially ordains Barnabas, and Saul to his Service. They are sent forth. Elymas the Sorcerer, is struck blind. Saul, {who also is called Paul,) preacheth in the Synagogue. The Jews blaspheme. The Gentiles believe.

ACTS 13:1-4

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. (2) As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. (3) And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. (4) So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

We enter here upon one of the most interesting records which we have in the word of GOD, as it relates to the ordination by the HOLY GHOST, to the ministry. And, after referring the Reader to what hath been already offered, on the Person and character of the SPIRIT, by way of Commentary, in this work, (see the 14th, and two following Chapters in the Gospel according to *John*), I very humbly beg his permission, to enlarge a little more particularly, on this gracious office of GOD the HOLY GHOST, as it is here set forth, in calling to the work of the ministry, *Barnabas* and *Saul*.

It should seem, that in this Church of CHRIST at *Antioch*, (from whence *Barnabas* and *Saul*, as related Acts 11:29-30 had been sent to *Judaea*, with their alms for the poor saints, and were now returned;) there were some, who were called Prophets and Teachers. By which are meant, I presume,

those who ministered in holy things. It was at one of their public meetings, that GOD the HOLY GHOST spake as is here said. And, as at the day of *Pentecost*, he had made an open, and visible manifestation of himself; so here, he was pleased to renew the token of his divine presence, by a voice, declaring his sovereignty and power. I beg the Reader not to lose the recollection, that GOD the FATHER did the same, when, by a voice from heaven, he declared CHRIST his *beloved SON*, *in whom he was well pleased*, Matthew 3:17. This revelation of GOD the HOLY GHOST, contains in it *Three* distinct, and special acts, in confirmation of his Person, GODHEAD, and Ministry; all which merit the Reader's close attention.

First. His Person, is as clearly proved by the action of *speaking, calling, and sending*, as the actions of any Being whatever, can prove, personality and identity. The pronouns, *me*, and *I*, are wholly personal; and are not capable of being made use of any other way. And as much as we infer, the person of a man, by the actions of a man; so the Person of GOD the HOLY GHOST is as fairly and fully inferred, by the actions here ascribed to Him.

Secondly. His GODHEAD must also be admitted, if the authority he here exercised, of *calling* and *ordaining* to the sanctuary service, *be* (as indeed it must be,) wholly the province of GOD. *No man taketh this honor unto himself but he that is called of GOD*, Hebrews 5:5. The HOLY GHOST called *Barnabas* and *Saul* to this honor; and consequently proved thereby, his eternal power, and GODHEAD.

And *thirdly.* The service, to which the LORD the SPIRIT *separated* and *called*, and *sent forth Barnabas* and *Saul*, is

strongly marked as his service; for he said: Separate *me*, or *for me*, *Barnabas* and *Saul*. So again, the LORD adds, *to the work* whereunto I have called them. They are not said to be separated to the LORD, or to the service of the Church; but the HOLY GHOST saith, separate *me*, that is, to my service. As if to shew, that his is the Almighty ministry in the Church; and all that act in it, act under him, and in his service, as well as by his appointment, John 14:26.

And were it not for swelling the pages of this *Poor Man's Commentary*, I should find it no difficult matter to prove, that as the HOLY GHOST anointed CHRIST, the Great Head of his Church, in his priestly office, when the SPIRIT *was given to him without measure*: John 3:34. So all his *members*, and especially his *ministers*, from Him derive all the unction necessary for their high calling, *according to the measure of the gift of CHRIST*, Ephesians 4:7. But, I must abridge myself of .this pleasure, and shall only beg to make a short observation, (taking occasion, from this ordination of *Barnabas* and *Saul*, as here stated,) on this work of GOD the SPIRIT, and on the characters of those men ordained.

I venture to conclude, that so palpable the truth appears, in this history, of the necessity of the LORD the SPIRIT'S ordaining, all that are called to any holy function, no one will question it. And, from the character of those men the LORD here ordained, it will be equally plain, that GOD the HOLY GHOST calls none to the ministry, but what he hath before called by his grace. Should any one of my brethren condescend to read these poor labors of mine, I hope that he will not be offended with the observation. Let the characters of *Barnabas* and *Saul* be well considered, and the point will, I conceive, be abundantly

plain. Of the *former* we are told, in a preceding Chapter, that he was *a good man, and full of the HOLY GHOST*, ACTS 11:24. And, concerning the *latter*, we know of his wonderful conversion by the LORD JESUS himself. So that *both*, were savingly called, and regenerated, and made rich partakers of grace, before that the LORD the HOLY GHOST sent them forth, to preach grace to the people.

And, indeed, had this not been the case, how should they have suited for the ministry of JESUS? A man can never speak of the malignity of sin, who hath never in himself felt the evil of sin, neither been made acquainted with *the plague of his own heart*, 1 Kings 8:38. A man cannot describe the love, the grace, the mercy, the favor of JESUS, who hath never felt, or known, those precious things from JESUS in his own soul. But he who hath felt, and known both; and in his own heart, hath experienced both; will best minister to others, when *from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*. This was what made the Apostles so animated in the service of the LORD. They themselves were awakened, and their chief bent was as instruments in the LORD'S hand, to awaken others. They held forth that bread of life, which they themselves had eaten of, and by which their souls lived. They called the people to the water of life, in JESUS, which they had drunk of, and found, as CHRIST had said, that *it was in them a well of water springing up to everlasting life*, 1 John 1:1-3; John 4:14. Oh! that all who minister in holy things, were thus first made partakers of the manifold gifts of GOD; and proved their ordination, like *Barnabas* and *Saul*, from GOD the HOLY GHOST; in that the word of CHRIST dwelt *in* them, by coming with power *from* them, and the LORD giving testimony to his truths, and to the

word of his grace, *by* them. Almighty LORD the SPIRIT! vouchsafe in this our day, as in those days of the Apostles, gracious manifestations of thy divine ordination of thy servants to the ministry! Oh! for that voice to be again heard in spirit, and felt in power, as it was then sounded: *Separate me* (multitudes of the true) *Barnabas's and Sauls, for the work whereunto I have called them!*

ACTS 13:5-12

And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister. (6) And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus: (7) Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. (8) But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. (9) Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, (10) And said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? (11) And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. (12) Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

I pass by all the observations which might be made of the extent of their labors, in those different places, to call the Reader's attention to what is here said, of the opposition made to the preaching of *Barnabas* and *Saul*, by *Elymas* the Sorcerer. The account is but short, but it is awful. His name, *Elymas*, is probably descriptive of his employment, a *magician*. But the HOLY GHOST hath more strongly marked his

real character. The Apostle, under his Almighty influence, called him, *child of the devil*. And, his opposition to a child of GOD, as the deputy governor *Sergius Paulus* proved to be, is at once a decisive proof of the different kingdoms to which they belonged. The father of this *Elymas*, even the devil, knew, both of the conversion, and ordination of those servants of the LORD. And when *Sergius Paulus* called for *Barnabas* and *Saul*, desiring to hear the word of GOD; all hell was up in arms, to withstand their preaching. *Elymas*, one of the serpent's brood, is stirred up to oppose. And the event is here recorded. But the Reader will not have drawn all the improvements from this scripture history, which it is designed to bring, if he doth not learn under the HOLY GHOST's teaching, that the same is going on every day throughout the world, and must go on to the end, in the holy war, between the seed of CHRIST, and the seed of the serpent. Nay, the enmity must be eternal. We have many an *Elymas* in our day, to oppose the truth; and who oppose it from the same cause. And if the same awful judgment of bodily blindness doth not always follow; a still more awful condemnation always takes place on the soul. The HOLY GHOST, by his servant *Jude*, hath said; that *to them is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever*. And the same Scripture explains the cause. See Jude 4; Jude 6-19. See also the *Poor Man's Commentary* on Matthew 12:30-35.

As at this place we now drop the name of *Saul*, with which indeed we are not so much accustomed, and from henceforth call this zealous servant of the LORD, *Paul*: I would just detain the Reader to remark, it is very probable that he used *both* names. For it is here said, *Saul*, who is *also* called *Paul*. The name of *Saul*, which is a *Jewish* name, was no doubt given

him by his parents. And this of *Paul*, is the name he was chiefly known by among the *Gentiles*, which is a *Roman* name, and given him because he was a citizen of *Rome*, Acts 22:28. But, as this name is first spoken of in this place, and at the conversion of *Sergius Paulus*, the Roman Deputy; is it not probable, (I ask the question, but not decide,) that it was now particularly chosen on account of this man?

ACTS 13:13-25

Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem. (14) But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. (15) And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. (16) Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. (17) The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm brought he them out of it. (18) And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. (19) And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he divided their land to them by lot. (20) And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. (21) And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. (22) And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will. (23) Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus: (24) When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. (25) And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose.

The Reader is perhaps aware, that it was the custom in the Synagogue, after the reading of the law, and the Prophets; for holy men to expound to the people, as they felt their minds disposed, the word of GOD. And as *Barnabas* and *Paul* had the reputation of being sacred characters, the chief ruler of the Synagogue invited them to speak, if they had any thing particularly to say. No doubt the LORD overruled the occasion. And we of this hour, find cause to bless the LORD for it, in the delightful discourse here recorded. But, I do not think it necessary to comment upon it. The whole is short, and so fully explained by Scripture, that it can require no further illustration.

ACTS 13:26-41

Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent. (27) For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him. (28) And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. (29) And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulcher. (30) But God raised him from the dead: (31) And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. (32) And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, (33) God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. (34) And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. (35) Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. (36) For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: (37) But he, whom God raised

again, saw no corruption. (38) Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: (39) And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. (40) Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; (41) Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

I request the Reader to remark with me, *some* of the many blessed things contained in this sermon of *Paul's*. Here he is indeed preaching CHRIST, fully, sweetly, and powerfully. Let the Reader first observe, how he opens his discourse. *Men and Brethren*, for so they were, as he himself was by birth a Jew. And *children of the stock of Abraham*; and this, no doubt, was peculiarly grateful to them, as they prided themselves on their descent from that honored Hebrew. But, that the *Gentiles* might consider themselves as included also in his address, (as no doubt many of the proselytes to the Jewish religion were present,) he added; and *whosoever among you feareth GOD*. So that he included the whole. And thus the LORD commanded *the Gospel to be preached to every creature*, Mark 16:15. But, let not the Reader fail to observe at the same time, that while it was the province of *Paul* thus to preach, and all the truly ordained ministers of the word, like *Paul*, to do the same; (for neither he, nor they, can do more;) unless the word of this salvation is *sent*, that is, directed by the power, and grace of GOD the SPIRIT; neither *Paul's* preaching, nor any other man's watering, will prove profitable, 1 Corinthians 3:5-7.

Before we proceed further, I would beg the Reader to pause, and make this view of the subject somewhat a little more practical.

The substance of *Paul's* preaching, he himself sums up, in what he calleth *the word of salvation*. And the Gospel of CHRIST, in every point of view, corresponds to this character. For it is *the power of GOD for salvation to every one that believeth*, Romans 1:16. And, whoever is made the happy partaker of it, hath a blessed apprehension in his own heart, of the blissful consequences. He finds it to be a salvation, *from death to life, from sin to righteousness, from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the living GOD*.

And, I pray the Reader to ponder well the distinguishing nature of this blessing of salvation; in that, it is said to be *sent*. It comes, by divine *appointment*. And it is sent, by divine *direction*. Like *the rain, of the dew of heaven, it waiteth not for man, neither tarrieth for the sons of men. The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people*, Micah 5:7. And what endears it yet more, is the distinguishing nature of it, in that, as it waits not for man's deserving; so neither for man's preparing to receive it. The grace of GOD, which bringeth salvation, doth not suppose men to be in a state of grace, but void of it: for, if the LORD was to wait till a man had prepared himself to receive, this would be to expect life in the dead; and corrupt nature to do that for itself, which salvation comes to give. Very blessedly, therefore, is it said to be *sent*; and to be sent to *the dead in trespasses and sins. I am come*, (said JESUS,) *that they might have life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live*, John 10:10; John 11:25.

There are numberless beauties in this sermon of *Paul's*, which, I hope, the LORD the SPIRIT will graciously unfold, and give efficacy to in the heart of the Reader. But I dare not enlarge. I must not however pass by noticing, the very comprehensive expression of the Apostle's, when he saith, that *by Him*, (that is, the LORD JESUS CHRIST,) *all that believe are justified from all things*; from which no justification could be found, *by the law of Moses*. I Have often thought, how very gracious it was in GOD the HOLY GHOST, *in* directing his servant *Paul* thus to teach the Church. The LORD well knew, how many of his people of little faith are at times sharply exercised, by reason of the slenderness of this principle; so as sometimes from the temptations of the enemy, and their own misgiving hearts, to call in question whether they have the least measure of faith. And, what a relief to the souls of all such ought it to lie, and no doubt hath frequently proved, when they are here told, and from an authority which cannot err, that *all that believe*; whether strong believers, or weak believers; whether babes in CHRIST, or fathers in GOD: all are alike *justified from all things*, by CHRIST. And, the reason is given. It is by Him. Yes! CHRIST'S Person, and CHRIST'S blood and righteousness, are the sole causes of justification; and perfectly distinct from, and unconnected with, any other circumstance whatever. It is indeed a very blessed thing, and calls for great thankfulness in the hearts of those, whom grace gives the power to enjoy it; when a child of GOD is *strong in the faith which is in CHRIST JESUS*. But it never should be forgotten, at the same time, that it is not our faith, but CHRIST'S salvation, which is the whole security of the LORD'S people. And the weakest believer, as well as the strongest,

are alike safe in CHRIST JESUS. *In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory*, Isaiah 45:25.

And, let me offer a short observation more. As faith is the entire gift of GOD, which, like our stature, we can neither add to, nor take from; a soul in grace, however conscious of the weakness of this blessed principle, should always take comfort in the assurance, that it is a gift of GOD which can never die; *for the gifts and calling of GOD, are without repentance*, Romans 2:29. A child of GOD, by virtue of that grace-union in CHRIST, which was given him in CHRIST JESUS, before the world began; Ephesians 1:4, is, during this time-state of the Church, quickened into spiritual life, in CHRIST JESUS. Now, this quickening can never die. This *incorruptible seed liveth and abideth forever*, 1 Peter 1:23. Death itself cannot destroy it. Hence, the Apostle blessedly saith: *He that hath the SON hath life*, 1 John 5:12. And JESUS declares it to be *life eternal*, John 17:2-3. So that neither in life, nor death, can there be any alteration here. And the reason is evident, because it is in CHRIST; yea, it is CHRIST himself, John 11:25. How truly blessed is it then, to behold our safety wholly in CHRIST. There are no procuring causes. Neither great faith nor little faith, have the least hand in the great work of salvation; And though, as was remarked before, it is a matter which calls for much love and praise, to the Almighty Author and Finisher of our faith, when we can cheerfully pass through a tabulated path of darkness, *rejoicing in hope of the glory of GOD*; yet even in that path, though lightened by faith, this must be the believer's song, when his heart is rightly tuned, and which is as much the portion of the weak believer, as the strong: *In the LORD have I righteousness and strength; even*

to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed, Isaiah 45:24.

If I may be indulged one moment longer, it shall be to observe, *how* solemnly the Apostle finished his sermon, in the concluding sentence of it. He had said, all that could be said, by way of encouragement to poor distressed, broken-hearted sinners which were present, in proclaiming the fulness, greatness, and freeness, of this salvation: and now he makes an appeal to any stout-hearted persons which were there, who would still neglect so great salvation. *Behold! ye despisers, and wonder and perish!*

There is somewhat tremendously awful in calling to their recollection their own scriptures, in confirmation of what he had said, and by quoting this passage from the Prophet, of those who not barely slighted, but despised the counsel of God, against their own souls, boldly to shew them the dangerous state to which they were exposed. See Habakkuk 1:5. I do not upon this, or any other occasion, desire to speak decidedly, but I beg the Reader to ask himself, whether the Apostle doth not, by the manner of speaking here made use of, very plainly intimate the total impossibility of those men he alluded to, of receiving the truth of God. They despised, and yet they wondered, they looked with astonishment at what they heard, but yet determined to resist all conviction. They tasted, but rejected the word of life. See Hebrews 6:4-6 and Commentary. And, Reader! have you not seen similar things in the present generation? I have. Oh! what numbers are there in the earth, who, like *Agrippa*, are almost persuaded to be Christians; but, like him, prefer time to eternity; and for the moment's gratification, rush into infinite woe, Acts 26:28.

Would the Reader learn the cause? The word of GOD explains, See Isaiah 6:9; 2 Peter 2:12-17; Jude 4.

ACTS 13:42-52

And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. (43) Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. (44) And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. (45) But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. (46) Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. (47) For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. (48) And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. (49) And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. (50) But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts. (51) But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium. (52) And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

It appears very plainly from what is here said, as the immediate consequence of *Paul's* eloquent discourse, that as it is for the most part now, so was it then; *some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.* The Gospel hath always been, and always must be, in proof of its divine truth, *the savor of life unto life, and of death unto death,* 2 Corinthians 2:15-16. And while the Reader remarks upon what is here said, of the whole city being moved with

the relation of the Apostle's preaching, I think it will strike him, that similar effects are not unusual now. What a day of hearing is the present! And how is almost the whole city up in arms to attend preaching! But, alas! what consequences follow? Perhaps there never was a period since the reformation of less vital godliness!

But here is the relief to every child of GOD, which this history teacheth, and which every age of the Church affords the same. We are told, that in the mixed multitude of Jew and Gentile, the LORD's testimony was given. For, *as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed*. Reader! this is the grand and essential standard. This forms the blessed decision, amidst all doubts and questions of men. All that were ordained to eternal life, in the FATHER'S gift, CHRIST'S purchase, and the HOLY GHOST'S regenerating grace, believed. Provision was made for these blessed effects from everlasting. *Thy people* (said JEHOVAH to CHRIST,) *shall be willing in the day of thy power*, Psalm 110:3. *All that the FATHER giveth me* (said CHRIST) *shall come to me*, John 6:37. *According to his mercy* (said Paul) *he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the HOLY GHOST*, Titus 3:5. Precious LORD JESUS! while thy redeemed are daily praying for an increase of faith, give us grace to praise thee for the least portion, which so fully proves our interest and everlasting safety in thee. *As many as were ordained to eternal life believed!*

REFLECTIONS

ALMIGHTY GOD the SPIRIT, blessed be thy holy name, for the open and signal display which thou wert pleased to make of thyself, and thy sovereignty, in the ordination of *Barnabas*

and *Saul* to the ministry of thy word. Do thou, gracious GOD, in mercy preside over all the assemblies of thy people, and especially in the setting apart to the sacred office the ministers of thy Church and people. Hast thou not said, with an eye to this unspeakable mercy, *I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.* In mercy, LORD, be it according to thy word, in an eminent manner, in the present day and generation!

LORD, grant that the fearful judgment of *Elymas*, may deter the sworn foes of our GOD, and of his CHRIST, from daring to oppose thy faithful sent servants. And for the word of salvation which our GOD hath sent, very sure we are that it will *never return unto thee void*; but as thou hast promised, give thy people grace to wait the accomplishment of it, for it must fulfill thy pleasure, and *prosper in the thing whereunto the LORD shall send it!*

Oh! precious LORD JESUS! cause thy people to rejoice in thy full and finished salvation. *By thee, all that believe, are justified from all things.* Here then, LORD, give thy people grace to rest. Let there be nothing wavering, nothing unsettled, in our faith; while every thing in the covenant of grace is *ordered, and sure in all things.* Oh! for faith, in lively exercise, to believe *the record* GOD hath given of his dear SON. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.* Let all thy faithful therefore of the present hour, as were the disciples of old, be strong in the grace which is in CHRIST JESUS, and, like them, *be filled with joy, and with the HOLY GHOST.*

CHAPTER 14

CONTENTS

Paul, and Barnabas, preaching in the Synagogue, are opposed by the unbelieving Jews. Paul healeth a Cripple. The Multitude are astonished, and are for offering to the Apostles divine Honors. Certain Jews from Antioch persuade the People, and Paul is stoned. He recovers, and, with Barnabas, departs from Antioch.

ACTS 14:1-7

And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. (2) But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren. (3) Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands. (4) But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles. (5) And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them, (6) They were aware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and into the region that lieth round about: (7) And there they preached the gospel.

Iconium was the chief city of *Lycaonia*, a province in the lesser *Asia*. Here the Apostles, *Barnabas* and *Paul* had fled, as CHRIST directed them, from the persecutions raised against them, Matthew 10:24. But here the same conflicts they had to encounter. How full of rage is Satan! He knoweth that he hath but a short time, Revelation 12:12. But, Reader! do not fail to remark, that though men, or devils, oppose the cause of CHRIST, that cause cannot fail. The LORD always hath, and

always will, as is here said, give testimony to the word of his grace, and fail not to bring home his redeemed to his everlasting kingdom. There is nothing doubtful in the final issue of the Church of CHRIST. No peradventures, or uncertainties. *All that the FATHER hath given to me* (said JESUS) *shall come to me*, John 6:37. JESUS is pledged for their eternal safety. So that not one of them can be found wanting, when *he maketh up his jewels*, Malachi 3:17, John 17:2

ACTS 14:8-10

And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked: (9) The same heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, (10) Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

We have here a most interesting account of a miracle wrought by *Paul*, in confirmation of the doctrines of grace. So CHRIST had promised, and here we behold the accomplishment. See Mark 16:17 to the end. It is worthy remark, that *Peter* and *John* opened their commission in the *Jewish Church*, with healing a cripple at the gate of the temple, Acts 3:2, &c. And here *Paul* and *Barnabas* commenced their public ministry to the *Gentile Church*, with healing a cripple also in the streets of *Lystra*. And both these cases were similar, being cripples from the womb, and never had walked, Striking emblems of the crippled state of the souls of GOD's people, by reason of sin; lame from the womb of nature, and such as not only never had walked, but as never could have walked, unless restored by JESUS CHRIST.

I beg the Reader to observe, what is said, concerning this man, bearing *Paul* speak. There is certainly somewhat more

intended from the expression, than merely that hearing which is promiscuous, and what is general. And I confess, that I am the more inclined to this opinion, from what is said of the Apostle in remarking it. For it is added, that he, *stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed; said with a loud voice, stand upright on thy feet.* We know that the Apostles possessed the faculty of discerning spirits: for this was among the spiritual gifts given to them. See 1 Corinthians 12:10-11. And hence, by virtue of it, the Apostle perceived the faith this man had. Is it not probable, (I ask the question, but do not decide upon it,) that the LORD, who placed this Cripple in the Apostle's way, did by him as he did by *Lydia*; opened his heart, to attend to the things which were spoken by *Paul*, Acts 16:14. Now, we are told, that *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of GOD*, Romans 10:17. And therefore, is it not as probable in the one instance, as in the other; that the LORD wrought a miracle of grace in the soul of this poor cripple, by regeneration, before that *Paul*, as the LORD's servant, wrought a work of mercy on the *body*, by healing him of his disease: and both, becoming blessed confirmations of the truth of the Gospel? However, be it as it may, one thing is certain: The poor cripple, at the Apostle's command, arose and stood on his feet, and leaped, and walked. And, Reader! do not overlook, that these were the promised effects which were to take place in the earth in the days of the Gospel, when *the lame man should leap as an hart; and the tongue of the dumb sing*, Isaiah 35:6.

And, if the Reader will allow me to detain him a moment longer, over this sweet miracle of sovereign grace shewn, as we have reason to hope, both to body and soul, I would

desire him to remark with me, the properties of grace, so beautifully illustrated as they are, in the example of this cripple. Here was no provision, no preparation, made on the part of the happy receiver. Yea, it is probable, that at the time, and perhaps after, he had no immediate consciousness, how much greater mercy he had been shewn to his soul, than to his body. Such, depend upon it, is the case, in the numberless instances that are going on continually in life. What *David* said, all GOD's children more or less find, and may with equal truth, say the same: *The GOD of my mercy shall prevent me*, Psalm 109:10. The LORD prevents, that is, goes before his people, in all their mercies. He is *found of them that seek him not*, Isaiah 65:1. Our whole *Adam*-nature, the Church, as well as the world, are all alike born crippled in all our faculties; yea, not merely crippled, but *dead in trespasses and sins*. There is no apprehension of this ruined state, in any one of the *Adam* race of our misery, much less a cry for deliverance from it. Therefore, when at any time the LORD healeth our souls, it is his preventing grace, not our application. The poor sinner is healed he knoweth not how; and faith is wrought in his heart in a way he hath no consciousness of. So wonderful, and powerful, are the works of grace. And oh! how infinitely more wonderful must He be in himself, and in the tendencies of his love towards his people, by whom the whole is wrought; and who is blessedly called, *the GOD of all grace!*

ACTS 14:11-18

And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. (12) And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. (13) Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city,

brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people. (14) Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, (15) And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: (16) Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. (17) Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. (18) And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

Reader! do not fail to observe, the awful darkness in which those men must have been covered, who, while looking with astonishment at the Apostles, in the contemplation of the miracle which they had wrought; had sense enough to know, that such an act could not be performed by man: yet were totally ignorant of the nature, and being of GOD. And, let me ask, is it not equally so with respect to a real knowledge of GOD, notwithstanding the light of the Gospel, in the present day, when such gross misconceptions take place, concerning the real character of JEHOVAH, in his threefold distinction of Person? How few are there, who though they profess this truth, that live in the heartfelt knowledge and enjoyment of it. The creed of multitudes, concerning this glorious, and fundamental article of our holy faith, is found only in their prayer-books. They know the Person of the FATHER, of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST, only by name. They constantly have heard of these truths. They have been *taught* to rehearse them. (Read that Scripture, Isaiah 29:13.) And they repeat in *words*, what they are taught to believe in *form*; but know not *the power of godliness*. And here they rest. But, in

respect to the relation of the Persons of the GODHEAD to each other, and of their love and grace to the Church: who of this description could give a reason, if they were asked, of *the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear?* 1 Peter 3:15.

Reader! do not dismiss the consideration of this subject, (for it is a solemn one,) before that you have given it a more special regard; as it concerns yourself, in making it personal. Depend upon it, that it is not the simple acknowledgement of GOD, as GOD, which constitutes a real faith in him. Neither is it all that is needful to be called true faith, which subscribes to the doctrine, that *there are three which bear record in heaven; the FATHER, the WORD, and the HOLY GHOST; and these three are ONE*, 1 John 5:7. For, although it be in fact, no acknowledgment of the true GOD, which doth not acknowledge him in the true scriptural revelation of Him, as existing in a threefold character of Person; yet men may acknowledge JEHOVAH in this sense *by mouth*, while having no saving apprehension of him as such, in the heart. *It is with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness*; and then from the heart, *with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*, Romans 10:10. Other belief is in fact no saving belief. For we are told, that there is a sense, in which *devils believe and tremble*, James 2:19. The true faith of the Gospel, on this, and every other momentous article of faith, is taught of GOD. And this becomes a life-giving, a soul-quickenng, and refreshing faith, bringing the believer into a personal acquaintance with each glorious Person of the GODHEAD, as they have been pleased to reveal themselves to the Church in CHRIST, in their Covenant offices, and characters: when you and I know, and have tasted, the love of GOD the FATHER, the

grace of GOD the SON, and the communion of GOD the HOLY GHOST, 2 Corinthians 13:14. And it was, as the LORD JESUS himself saith, for the communication of this knowledge, that as GOD-Man Mediator, he had *power given him over all flesh*; that *he should give eternal life to as many as the FATHER had given him*. And, CHRIST defined this eternal life, to consist in this knowledge; *to know Him the only true GOD, (FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST,) and JESUS CHRIST GOD-Man Mediator, whom JEHOVAH hath sent, John 17:2-3*. Reader! what hath the LORD taught you, of these precious things? The belief, the mere profession of belief, in an unknown GOD, is no belief at all. *They that know thy name, (is the language of scripture,) will put their trust in thee, Psalm 9:10*.

I hardly think it necessary to pause and remark, what is so very plain, the stupidity of those people at *Lystra*, in their proposed sacrifices. We may indeed make an improvement under grace from it, in observing on the one hand, to what a desperate state of ruin our whole nature is reduced, by the fall; and on the other, what grace the LORD JESUS hath manifested to his Church, in her recovery. What line shall fathom the vast depths of misery, in the one; and what stretch of thought, calculate the infinite dimensions of mercy, in both depths, heights, breadths, and lengths, in the other? Ephesians 3:17-19.

But I pass over for the present, the consideration of these things, in order to call the Reader's attention to that part of the Apostle's sermon, before these men of *Lystra*, wherein he speaks of the LORD'S *suffering, in times past, all nations to walk in their own ways*. Which is a similar expression to what he said some time after, in his discourse before the men at

Athens. The times of this ignorance GOD winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent, Acts 17:30.

It cannot be supposed that in either case, *Paul* meant, that the GOD of the whole earth was indifferent to the conduct of his creatures. Much less, that the infinite Creator, *whose eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good*; can possibly be an inattentive observer, to any of the works of his Almighty hands. But, the sense seems to be this. The Apostle is drawing a line of distinction, between the Church and the world. And he intended to shew them, from what he said of himself and his companion, that as they were *men of like passions with themselves*; the Church of GOD, no more than the world, had in themselves any difference of nature. It is as if *Paul* had said; though to the coming of CHRIST, the LORD *suffered all nations to walk in their own ways*, all the purposes of revelation being wholly with an eye to his Church; yet even then, from the fall of man, the LORD had been gathering out his children, wheresoever they were scattered, from the Adam-nature of corruption. But *now*, by the SON of GOD having finished redemption-work, and being returned to glory; the HOLY GHOST is come down, to send abroad the remedy of GOD's own providing for sin; and commanding all men every where to repent. This appears to be the mean drift of the Apostle's words. GOD's people consisting both of Jew and Gentile, are scattered over the face of the earth. And, therefore, still with an eye to the Church, so scattered, the LORD is sending his message to them. And the consequence will be, that *all* in every nation, *whom the FATHER hath given to his SON, shall come to him*; for he that calls them to repent,

will give them grace to repent; for *they shall come that are ready to perish*, John 6:37; Isaiah 27:13; Acts 5:31.

And, in the further confirmation of these truths, the Apostle adds: *Nevertheless, the LORD left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.* Meaning, no doubt, that notwithstanding in spiritual things, the LORD had all along respect only to his Church; yet he left not himself without witness to the whole earth in temporal things. The Covenant which he made after the flood with all flesh, had stood firm, and would stand firm, never to be broken. The LORD had said, and several thousand years had now run out since the LORD said it, to confirm the purpose of his unchangeable decree. *While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, should not cease*, Genesis 8:22.

I beg the Reader to remark this. And, while he doth remark it, in testimony to the faithfulness of a Covenant GOD with all flesh, and to which every day's experience gives a further testimony; let him not forget, that while the LORD continueth his fruitful seasons, and fills the heart with food and gladness, carnal men have not the true relish which spiritual men enjoy. Here, as in the other instance, there is still a line of distinction drawn. It is not the mere possession of *the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, nor the precious things put forth by the moon; unless the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush, sweeten, and sanctify all*, Deuteronomy 33:14-16. It is the want of this, for which so many aching hearts are in fine houses: and on the contrary, the possession of this, which gladdens the sorrowful situations of many that are very poor.

Reader! turn over the subject for yourself, and judge accordingly. See Commentary on Acts 17:22, &c.

ACTS 14:19-28

And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. (20) Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. (21) And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, (22) Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. (23) And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. (24) And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. (25) And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia: (26) And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. (27) And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. (28) And there they abode long time with the disciples.

It is worthy observation, how fluctuating and inconstant the minds of men are, in respect to religious things, where the heart is not established in grace. Here are those very persons, of whom we read in a few preceding verses, which would have offered, in the extravagance of their zeal, divine honors to *Paul* and *Barnabas*, would now stone them. And was it not so with the LORD JESUS? The multitude, which hailed him with *Hosannas*, within a few days after, cried out, *Crucify him, Crucify him*. So it hath been, and so will it be, in all ages of the Church, during the present time-state of her pilgrimage. See notes on Luke 4:32. See also Matthew 10:21-25; John

15:18-21. *Paul* seems to have referred to this treatment, 2 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Timothy 3:10-11.

I pray the Reader not to overlook the faith and boldness of *Paul*, who, although he had been stoned at *Lystra*; yet shunned not to go there, for a second benefit to the Church. And *Iconium*, however undeserving, shall not lose the blessings of his labors, where the LORD had before owned his ministry, though there were many adversaries, 1 Corinthians 16:9. If the Reader would see *Paul's* comment upon this part of his history, he may read it: 1 Corinthians 4:9-13. Oh! that all ministers of CHRIST, had the grace to be like him, faithful!

I detain the Reader in the close of this Chapter, to notice what is said about *confirming the souls of the disciples*. By which we are authorized to conclude, that those were partakers of grace. For otherwise, they could not be confirmed, in what they were not. And, indeed, we are told as much, in the opening of this Chapter. *A great multitude*, (it is said) *both of Jews and Greeks, believed* (Acts 15:1). So that they were real regenerated followers of the LORD. It was highly proper, that they should be confirmed in the faith, which is in CHRIST JESUS. Whether there was any particular service used upon this occasion, is not said. Some of the old writers have said much, in contending that there was. Others have said not. But, on the supposition that there was, it should seem to have been more than probable, agreeable to primitive times, the ordinance was accompanied with the breaking of bread, and of prayer. See Acts 2:46-47, and Acts 20:36. And, if such was the service of Confirmation, it must have been a blessed service; where both the persons confirming, and the persons confirmed, were all in grace, Acts

11:24; Galatians 1:15-16. All the beholders of such an assembly must have felt, what *Paul* himself describes, of one coming into a similar congregation of spiritual worshippers; and, being smitten with a deep sense of what he had heard and felt, would fall upon his face, and worship GOD; and *report that GOD was in them of a truth!* 1 Corinthians 14:25.

We have a short, but it is an interesting account, of an Ordination held by the Apostles, And truly, it must have, been altogether Apostolical. It appears to have been observed in prayer and fasting: and then the Apostles commended the Elders to the LORD *in whom they believed*. And these things, for the most part, are all that comes within the province of man in ordination to perform. For the ordination itself, must be of the LORD. CHRIST, as the Head of his body the Church, appoints his under Shepherds, in his fold. And GOD the HOLY GHOST consecrates, and ordains them. And, oh! how truly called, separated, and sent forth to the service of the sanctuary, who are thus anointed by the sovereign unction of GOD the HOLY GHOST? What may not be expected, from such a ministry? What blessings are too great to look for in that Church, where the ministers of CHRIST, and stewards of the mysteries of GOD, come forth in the authority of JESUS, ordained by GOD the HOLY GHOST; and through grace, are enabled to give themselves first to the LORD, and then to his people? See Acts 13:2 and Commentary. HOLY, Blessed, and Eternal SPIRIT! in love and compassion to thy Church, send forth Pastors after thine own heart, to feed thy people with knowledge and understanding. Jeremiah 2:15.

REFLECTIONS

GRACIOUS LORD! we behold, in what is here said in this Chapter, the true representation of thy Church, in all ages. The faithful sent servants must endure persecution. The pure Gospel of JESUS, will never be relished by the corrupt minds of the unawakened; neither will it be cordially received by those, who desire to add law to Gospel. But, what grace LORD must it be in thee, to overrule the malice of the enemy, when opposing thy truths, in making the flight of thy servants from persecution to minister to thy glory, in dispersing thy word every where. Oh! may such views sweetly teach my soul, to cry out with the Psalmist, *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath wilt thou restrain!* I see, LORD, by this wonderful work of thine, that so much of the wrath of man as thou wilt convert into good, shall be employed to praise thee; all the further malice intended, shall be driven, like water running to waste, into another channel.

Will it please my honored LORD, to teach my soul to profit, from the changeable opinion of men, as here set forth; first in honoring his servants too much, and afterwards in treating them so cruelly; to leave all confidence in the creature, and live wholly upon my GOD the Infinite Creator. Precious JESUS! doth not every day's experience with a loud voice proclaim the solemn truth: *Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?* Oh! the blessedness of knowing thee, living to thee, walking with thee, and rejoicing in thee, as the LORD my righteousness. Here let my soul be daily confirmed, and then it matters not, what tribulation I pass through, to enter into thy kingdom! And grant, LORD, to all thy seat servants, the continual

manifestations of thy favor, to bear them up, and bear them on, and bear them through, all opposition. Shortly the LORD will come, to take all his redeemed home, both ministers and people, to himself, for ever: and then the whole of persecution will end, in an everlasting day of the full knowledge, and enjoyment of may GOD for ever!

CHAPTER 15

CONTENTS

Disputes arise in the Church, on the Subject of Circumcision. The Apostles and Elders are consulted on it. Their Determination is sent to the Churches. Paul and Barnabas differ, and separate.

ACTS 15:1-5

And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. (2) When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. (3) And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. (4) And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. (5) But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

I beseech the Reader not to overlook, how early dissention arose in the Church, notwithstanding the Apostles had been

so openly ordained by the HOLY GHOST to the ministry. One might have thought, that nothing would have sprung up to disturb the peace of the Church, at such a golden age, when men so highly taught, were alive to prevent it. Every case of dispute arising from the remains of in-dwelling corruption, might have been brought before them, and their decision unerring and final. But, we learn from hence, how universal and unceasing the deadly fruits of our fallen state are! It is blessed, however, to observe, how sweetly the LORD overrules evil for good; and makes that which is sinful in itself, by his grace, to minister to his glory. *There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.* 1 Corinthians 11:19.

I beg the Reader, however, to observe, (and the same will serve to guide him upon all similar occasions,) that those men which came from *Judaea*, came not from the Apostles' authority. (See Acts 15:24). All schism, springs from the corruptions of men; they derive no sanction from GOD. And, it should be further observed, that this rite of circumcision, which they contended for, was joined with the necessity of keeping the law of *Moses* (see Acts 15:5). And thus they were shackling the free grace of GOD, with the will-worship, and will-working of man. And, the ultimate object was, to render CHRIST and his finished salvation, a matter of uncertainty, whether it should prove beneficial or not to the Church of GOD. Reader! pause over the subject. Will-worship is the same, in every age of the Church, under whatever covering it hides itself. Ordinances, even the purest, and the best of Ordinances, are no SAVIORS. When men lay more stress upon them, than they do upon the everlasting love of GOD the

FATHER; the union of CHRIST with his Church, before all worlds; and his finished redemption in the glories of his Person, blood, and righteousness, when saving her from all the sin and evils of this time-State of her warfare; and the regenerating grace of GOD the HOLY GHOST; they abuse them, in converting them into a purpose for which they were never intended. In such seasons of the Church, it is blessed to live above all party spirit of men, by living upon CHRIST; and suffering not GOD's' grace to be made subservient to man's will. If the Reader will consult what *Paul* said to the *Galatians* on this subject, he will find, how warmly the Apostle reproved all such errors. See Galatians 5 throughout, particularly Galatians 5:1-6.

It appears, that *Paul* and *Barnabas*, who were preachers of free grace, in opposition to the doctrine of circumcision, had warm disputes with those free-will men and work-mongers, before the subject was proposed to be brought before the Apostles and Elders at *Jerusalem*. And probably, those men, as we find *Paul* himself took notice of upon several occasions, were disposed to call in question *Paul's* authority, and to run down his Apostleship as much as possible: as if his judgment was not to be considered, in point of value, with the first and original Apostles. See Galatians 2:1-10. Reader! think it not strange, at what is going on now in the Christian world, in the opposition made to the plainest and purest doctrines of the Gospel; when we find such men as *Paul* and *Barnabas* so lightly esteemed. The great enemy of souls, wageth war chiefly with those grand truths, in which the present and everlasting welfare of the Church depends. Such, I mean, as the eternal love, purpose, and grace, of GOD the FATHER, to

the Church, before all worlds. The GODHEAD, Person, work, blood-shedding, and righteousness, of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. The Person, GODHEAD, love, and grace, of GOD the HOLY GHOST, in his regenerating, convincing, converting, and sanctifying influence, upon the persons of the LORD's people, While these grand, and infinitely momentous doctrines are insisted upon, as the sole life of the soul; the enemy will raise up all the various methods his subtlety can devise, to counteract them, and keep as much as possible in the back ground their importance. He stirreth up enemies *from without*, among the ungodly and carnal, to say, that good order among men is in danger, and nothing but licentiousness will follow, if such doctrines are allowed to be preached. And, he stirreth up the corruptions of friends *within*, to lay more stress upon things of less moment, in order to keep out of view those most essential truths, *Paul* saw this, and felt it in his day, and before his departure from the Church at *Ephesus* foretold it, as an evil that would follow. *I know, (said he,) that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your ownelves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them,* Acts 20:29-30. But, Reader! let you and I learn to make a proper distinction, between things which are essential, and others which are of no moment. If we are called upon to contend, let it be a holy contention for what is worth contending for; namely, *the faith which was once delivered to the saints*, Jude 3. And, let us see that we are living ourselves upon what we contend for with others, or would recommend to them to live upon also. All our springs of grace here, and glory hereafter, are in CHRIST. His GODHEAD, and our compleat justification in *him*, are the life of our soul. To give up these,

were to give up life. For, *if righteousness come by the law, then CHRIST is dead in vain*, Galatians 2:21.

ACTS 15:6-21

And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. (7) And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. (8) And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; (9) And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. (10) Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? (11) But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. (12) Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. (13) And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: (14) Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. (15) And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, (16) After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: (17) That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. (18) Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. (19) Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: (20) But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. (21) For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

There is somewhat very interesting in what is here related, of this holy meeting. The three Apostles, *Peter, James, and John*, were at *Jerusalem* at this time: (Galatians 2:9.) and, no

doubt, though no notice is taken of *John's* speaking on the subject, as *Peter* and *James* did, he was present also. And, as it is said, (Acts 15:4.) that *Paul* and *Barnabas* were received of the Church at *Jerusalem*, and a goodly company of the Church from *Antioch* accompanied them thither; we may well suppose this meeting must have been very numerous. Five, at least, Apostles, with the Elders of Jerusalem, and the whole Church of that city; (Acts 15:22) and many of the Church from *Antioch!* And, above all! How eminently must have been the presence of the LORD in the midst? Reader! Is it not a subject of great animation, to contemplate, if but in idea, an assembly so formed under the LORD?

I consider it a subject, which calls for great thankfulness to GOD the HOLY GHOST, in causing those words of the Apostles upon a point of such consequence as was here determined in this assembly to be recorded. Who but must behold GOD speaking in them, and by them, to this important purpose! And, while we find the matter so fully decided, as if to put an end to every thing of a like nature, which might arise in the future ages of the Church, to disturb the peace of it; how truly blessed is it to find included also in this decision, the oneness of the Church of CHRIST, in both Jew and Gentile. This was a grand point to be made fully known to the Church. And, in what James was taught to deliver, it is, according to my view of what he said, most blessedly expressed, and confirmed. For, having quoted a well-known prophecy of *Amos*, (Amos 9:11-12) in reference to the Church of our spiritual *David*, whose tabernacle, in the *Adam-nature* of sin, was fallen down, and by Him was to be rebuilt; he adds, that *all upon whom his Name was called might seek the LORD*. And

these things were not the result of any after act, in the divine mind, but the eternal purpose of JEHOVAH; FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, in Covenant purposes and engagements, from everlasting. There is somewhat so truly blessed in this, short as the Apostle's statement is, as can never be sufficiently admired; neither GOD the HOLY GHOST sufficiently thanked for, in causing it to be recorded. Truly we may say, with the Apostle: *known unto GOD are all his works from the beginning!* I must not trespass by quotations. But I beg the Reader, in confirmation of this precious truth, (for indeed it is most precious,) that he will look at a few scriptures before he quits the subject, Ephesians 1:3-6; Ephesians 3:1-11; John 10:16; Isaiah 49:1-6.

ACTS 15:22-35

Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: (23) And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. (24) Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: (25) It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, (26) Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (27) We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. (28) For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; (29) That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well, Fare ye well. (30) So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: (31) Which when they had read, they

rejoiced for the consolation. (32) And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them. (33) And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles. (34) Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still. (35) Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

Though the purport of this Apostolic Epistle is as plain as words can be rendered; yet I think it necessary to detain the Reader with a short observation, to avoid any misapprehension. This letter from the holy College, it should be remembered, was sent, to settle the main point in question, respecting *Circumcision*, By the full decision of the Apostles and Elders, and the whole Church, assembled for that purpose, under GOD the HOLY GHOST; (Acts 15:28) this *Jewish* rite was now for ever done away. But, lest the Gentile Church should abuse this Christian liberty; or the Jewish Church should be tempted to conceive, a total freedom from all restrictions whatever, was included; the Apostles declared, that while that Jewish rite of circumcision was removed, the abstinence from those idolatrous customs to which the Gentiles, before their conversion to GOD were accustomed, must be, fully observed. And, I would beg to make another observation, respecting the several things, which are *four* in number, here brought together. The eating meats offered to idols, and blood, and things strangled, are classed with fornication; but this doth not imply as though these things were equally sinful. The former ceased when idolatry ceased, which at conversion, when the work was of GOD, and the sinner truly regenerated; took place. But the latter, namely, *fornication*, is, and will be, of everlasting obligation to abstain from, as long as the world remains; and the holy estate of

GOD's ordinance in marriage, (which is a type of CHRIST'S marriage with his Church,) shall continue.

Reader! how blessedly the Gospel enforceth every thing that is lovely, in an holiness of life and conversation, and brings with it to every renewed soul, grace and strength from GOD the SPIRIT, to perform it; while teaching at the same time, that it is *grace we are saved through faith*, and not by the deeds of the law. Blessedly indeed is it said, that through the SPIRIT alone it is, that *we can mortify the deeds of the flesh, and live*, Romans 8:13. Oh! thou SPIRIT of holiness! create in thy people new hearts, and new minds, by thy continual renewings, Put forth the efficacy of CHRIST'S blood, upon all whom thou hast called with an holy calling, to purge the conscience, and daily, hourly, to wash away every thing that is unholy, and unclean, in our lives and conversation. Oh! for the renewings of the HOLY GHOST, to be shed upon the whole redeemed family abundantly, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD, Titus 3:5-6.

ACTS 15:36-41

And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. (37) And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. (38) But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. (39) And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; (40) And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. (41) And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

I would pause over this contention of these faithful servants of the LORD, to make all suitable reflections upon it. As GOD the HOLY GHOST hath been pleased to have it recorded in his Church, it may well be supposed, that it will be to our profit, to attend to it. Here then, we see two eminent fellow laborers in the service of their LORD, who had gone for several years, as it should seem together, and with their lives in their hands, and moreover sent forth by the HOLY GHOST, to his work; (Acts 13:4) now separating asunder, upon a point of apparently no great importance. And, this separation was made at a time, when the peace of the Church had been but just established, from the saw of contention having passed over the Church, about the introduction of the law with the Gospel: Acts 15:1-2. Yea, *Paul* and *Barnabas* were sent by the Church to *Antioch* jointly to deliver the decrees ordained by the Apostles and Elders at *Jerusalem*, on this question of Circumcision, Acts 15:22-23. And, a very blessed time it should seem, they had together at *Antioch*, on that occasion. But yet, all these things, were not sufficient to suppress the risings of contention between them; but part they would, and part they did. And thus the Church is taught, that the best of men are but men; and, as *Paul* himself had but a little space before told the people of *Lystra*, so here was shewn; that they were *men of like passions with ourselves*, Acts 14:15. Reader! let this be our improvement from it. Look to JESUS. He, and he alone, is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, Hebrews 7:26. Oh! how sweet is the relief, when amidst every thing unsatisfying in ourselves, and all creature comforts, we can, look to JESUS; and *cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of*, Isaiah 2:22.

Let it be observed, however, in the instance of this quarrel, how graciously the LORD overruled it, to his glory, and the promotion of his Church's welfare. For, by this separation, the word of GOD was further extended, when *Barnabas*, by going unto *Cyprus*, and *Paul* through *Syria* and *Cilicia*, carried the glad tidings of salvation to those places. But, though the LORD's providences in extracting good from evil, calls upon the Church to adore his Almighty hand, in the grace, manifested; yet we should learn also, that while this ministers to his glory, the evil of sin in our fallen nature remains the same. It is still our infirmity, which produceth such sad consequences. The LORD'S is the sole praise, which, even from the unworthiness of his people, will bring sweet from the bitter, and manifest divine strength to bear up against creature weakness.

We should not, I think, dismiss the subject of this contention of those holy men, without taking into our view of it, what afterwards followed. It is very plain, from the history of the Church, that though *Paul*, rather than take *Mark* with him at that time, separated from *Barnabas*, yet he still loved them both, and afterwards, upon more than one occasion, spoke of them with all the love of a brother. Yea, this very *Mark* was with *Paul* just before his martyrdom; and the aged Apostle, then with full prospect of death in view, tells *Timothy*, that he must bring *Mark* with him, for, said he, *he is profitable to me for the ministry*. See 1 Timothy 4:11. See also 1 Corinthians 9:6; Colossians 4:10. Grace in the heart *will revive as the Corn*, though the remaining weeds of indwelling corruption will too often choke it, Hosea 14:7. But how, and from whence is this revival? Read the last six words of the following verse. *From me* (saith the LORD,) *is thy fruit found*.

Oh! precious JESUS! how sweet in all things is thy Person, grace, and power?

REFLECTIONS

How can I begin, or end, the perusal of this blessed Chapter, without having my whole soul led to the LORD JESUS, in contemplating the infinite preciousness of his Almighty Person, and the finite preciousness of his Almighty work. Truly, LORD, thou hast shewn thy Church and people, that *in CHRIST JESUS neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature*, No obedience to the law, nor all the imperfect and unmeriting services of thy servants under the Gospel, can recommend to GOD. All justification is alone in thee. And oh! how very blessed to the souls of thy redeemed ones, is that precious Scripture, *CHRIST is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*. Be it my portion, O LORD, under the sweet influences of the HOLY GHOST, to enter into an heartfelt enjoyment of these things, that I may be included in that glorious assurance of my GOD, by his servant the Prophet, *In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory*.

Praises to GOD the HOLY GHOST for thus causing the frailties of his faithful servants to be recorded, for the edification and encouragement of more frail and exercised servants of our GOD, in the service and ministry of his word. Oh! that the LORD the SPIRIT may render *the* review of it at all times profitable to his Church. Earthen vessels at the best, even the Apostles of CHRIST were, and how less than nothing, but as the sufficiency is in CHRIST, must be all that labor in the Word and doctrine. Oh! then vouchsafe thy sovereign grace, O LORD

the SPIRIT, to all thy sent servants. Make them one in CHRIST, and then will they with one mouth and one heart glorify GOD, and be at peace among themselves.

CHAPTER 16

CONTENTS

We are here first brought acquainted with Timothy. Paul hath a Vision to call him to Philippi. The LORD opens the Heart of Lydia. Paul and Silas are imprisoned. The Jailor is converted, Paul and Silas depart from Philippi.

ACTS 16:1-5

Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: (2) Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. (3) Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. (4) And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. (5) And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

It is astonishing, after what is related in the preceding Chapter, and after what we read of *Paul's* sentiments concerning circumcision, Galatians 5:2, that the Apostle should have so temporized in relation to *Timothy*. But how sweetly do all the infirmities of men, yea, and great men too, when the LORD the SPIRIT is our teacher, preach the glories and perfections of CHRIST, and our compleat need of him.

ACTS 16:6-13

Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, (7) After they were come to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. (8) And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. (9) And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. (10) And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. (11) Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; (12) And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. (13) And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

I do entreat the Reader to remark what is here said of the HOLY GHOST. What can be an higher proof of His Almighty Ministry in the Church? He forbids to preach in one place. He sends to another. Can any thing more strongly define distinguishing grace? So the Prophet speaks, in the name of the LORD, *I caused it* (said the LORD,) *to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city*, Amos 4:7. And I entreat the Reader to observe with me, that when the *persons* of his people are concerned, then it is no longer the place which is objected to. *This Bithynia*, when the LORD's people are there, the LORD will send to. Hence *Peter*, directed so to do by the HOLY GHOST, sends his Epistle to *Bithynia*. See 1 Peter 1:1, See Jeremiah 3:14.

ACTS 16:14-15

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. (15) And when she was baptized, and her

household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

Every circumstance in the history of this woman is striking, and merits our attention.

First, We find a special call of *Paul* to *Macedon*; and the first reason for it, is given in the history of this woman being called to GOD, through the instrumentality of *Paul's* preaching. The LORD hath said, he will seek out his sheep, and deliver them out of all places whither they have been scattered, Ezekiel 34:12.

It is further remarkable in the case of this woman's conversion, that though she was in this city of *Philippi*, when *Paul* was sent here, she was not an inhabitant of this place, but of *Thyatira*, a country far removed from it; for *Philippi* was in *Europe*, and *Thyatira* on the borders of *Asia*. So that the LORD must have brought her to *Philippi*, and then called *Paul* thither, to bring about the purposes of his grace. Doth the Reader ask, whether the conversion of this woman might not have been accomplished without those means, had she remained in *Thyatira*? I answer, Yes, without doubt, the LORD might so have wrought. But the LORD is pleased not unfrequently, to appoint otherwise; and what the LORD appoints must be right. And it is very precious when we see how the LORD, who fixeth the bounds of his people's habitations, arrangeth every thing for his glory, and his people's happiness.

There is another sweet circumstance in this woman's history. Though in the eyes of the world she was a person of no great

rank or character, a seller of purple only, not one dressed, as the rich man in the parable is described, in purple and fine linen, but one that moved about from place to place to get her daily bread, yet so precious in the eyes of JESUS, as one of his jewels, that a special messenger shall be sent to her to tell her words whereby she must be saved. Reader! learn from hence how valuable in the eyes of JESUS are all his redeemed ones, Luke 16:19.

I pray the Reader to consider another feature respecting this woman. GOD the HOLY GHOST hath caused her name to be handed down in the Church with honorable testimony. Had she not been precious to the LORD, neither her history, nor name would have been given. But now her name is known by thousands, and her history also, while millions of the human race, and multitudes which have made a figure also in their day and generation among the carnal and ungodly, and thought themselves persons of no small consequence, are now buried in everlasting oblivion, and are known no more. Oh the blessedness of being in CHRIST! Oh, the blessedness of being recorded in his book and having our names written in heaven, Philippians 4:3; Luke 10:20; Revelation 13:8; Psalm 139:16.

But the principal feature to be noticed in *Lydia's* history, is, that the LORD opened her heart to attend to the things which were spoken by *Paul*. Yes. For if the LORD had not opened her heart, Paul never could. Reader! this is one of the most important points in the Gospel to be regarded. Oh! that it was well and duly considered, because in every instance it must be the same. For it is not man's preaching, but the LORD's ordering, and the opening of the heart is the LORD'S work, and

not man's. Did men but consider what a work is wrought when conversion-work is wrought, how different would be their views concerning the importance of salvation from what they now have of it. In every instance, all the persons of the GODHEAD must, and do concur. No man can come to CHRIST, without the drawings of the FATHER. And these drawings are a proof of his everlasting love, John 6:44; Jeremiah 31:3. None can open the heart but He who hath the key of David, Revelation 3:7. None but that GOD who moved over the face of the waters at the old creation, can cause light to spring out of darkness in the new, 2 Corinthians 4:6. So that the whole persons of JEHOVAH put their Almighty hand to the work in the conversion of *Lydia*; and the same is essential in the instance of every sinner, whom the LORD makes willing in the day of his power, Psalm 110:3. Reader! what saith your experience to this scriptural testimony? If He who opened *Lydia's* heart hath mercifully opened your's, you can best explain the greatness of the work, the difficulties of it, the state of your mind before it was wrought, in the dominion of sin and Satan, and the state of your heart since GOD was so gracious, as will render unnecessary any observations of mine upon the subject to explain. All those blessed effects which marked *Lydia's* conduct, will more or less manifest themselves in your life and conversation. All the LORD's faithful servants, his ordinances, his word, his sabbaths, his people, will be dear to the heart. Nothing will be judged equally valuable as CHRIST and his.

ACTS 16:16-18

And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: (17) The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. (18) And

this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

There is somewhat very singular in what is here related. This damsel was evidently under an evil possession, as the craft she was engaged in proves. But what she said was strictly true, for the Apostles were the LORD'S servants, and shewed the way of salvation in preaching CHRIST, John 14:6. But whether the LORD over-ruled the enemy which deluded her, to give an unwilling testimony to the truth, as it is in JESUS, as he did in the days of his flesh concerning CHRIST himself, Mark 1:24, or whether the LORD did by her, as he did by the poor man possessed of an evil spirit among the tombs, suffer this evil possession to be for a time, for the greater manifestation of the LORD'S glory, I cannot presume to say. See Mark 5:1-20 and Commentary upon it. But it is worthy remark, that when in the name of the LORD JESUS, Paul commanded the evil spirit to come out, the infamous gain of her masters was at an end, and affords a reasonable hope, that, as in the case of the poor man among the tombs, this damsel might have been delivered, as he was, from the power of Satan to the living GOD. It is true that the scripture is silent, and hath not added this part to her history. We have therefore no authority to make the conclusion as certain. But it is equally true, that she was delivered from the delusion under which she had been, and therefore we are in some measure authorized to hope it. But here we leave the subject.

ACTS 16:19-24

And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, (20) And brought them to the magistrates,

saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, (21) And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. (22) And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. (23) And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely: (24) Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

Reader! while attending to what is here said, in the conflicts and sufferings of GOD's faithful servants, do not forget what the LORD JESUS said, *In the world ye shall have tribulation. In me ye shall have peace*, John 16:33. *Paul* refers to this unjust and cruel treatment in his Epistle to the *Thessalonians*; and makes use of it to shew that the LORD's promise had its accomplishment. *For yourselves* (said he) *brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain; but even after we had suffered before, and were shamefully treated as ye know at Philippi, we were bold in our GOD to speak unto you the Gospel of GOD with much contention*, 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2. And it is very blessed to behold, how stripes occasioned strength; and the malice of enemies endeared the LORD to the hearts of his suffering servants. Look at these holy men under every conflict. Wherever they were, how shamefully soever, as *Paul* saith, they were handled, the bitterness of persecution only rendered them more impregnable to suffering. *None of these move me*, (said Paul,) *neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the LORD JESUS, to testify the Gospel of the grace of GOD*, Acts 20:24. What a blessed frame of mind! Oh! what a gracious GOD to give it!

ACTS 16:25-34

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. (26) And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. (27) And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. (28) But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. (29) Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, (30) And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? (31) And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. (32) And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. (33) And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. (34) And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

Here are several very interesting subjects opened to our meditation within the limits of these few verses, of a different nature, but all sweetly corresponding to one great point, namely, to set forth the glory and prayer of the LORD JESUS. The situation of *Paul*, and his companion, when thrust into this loathsome place, and with many stripes on their backs, and their feet made fast in the stocks, was truly exercising; but as no prison can shut out CHRIST, so no prison can shut in the soul. JESUS giveth songs in the night, and the midnight hour is a day-light hour, when GOD the HOLY GHOST calls up his people to prayer and praise!

This was not the first time the LORD had answered the prayers of his saints by an earthquake. See Acts 4:31 and Commentary upon it. How Sweetly that promise was here fulfilled, Isaiah 65:24. And was it not (I ask the question,) as

if to teach them of His abiding presence, who came down in an open display of glory at *Pentecost*? ACTS 2:1, And what a courage it must have imparted to the Apostles, when such decided testimonies were given them, both of the LORD's presence, and the LORD's power? Reader! do not overlook the rich assurance such things bring with them to the present hour, of the same presence and power, though such open manifestations may not be now made, because they are not needed. Read, in confirmation of it, only these *two* promises, and if the LORD applies them to the heart, they will be fully conclusive, Matthew 28:20; Isaiah 27:2-3.

The effect wrought upon the jailor, prompts the mind to ask, whether the LORD in rich mercy had not suffered his sent servants to be imprisoned, purposely to bring about the wonderful event of this man's conversion. But be this as it may, surely no faithful servant of the LORD would shrink from stripes and a prison, if by such means the LORD should be pleased to minister to the salvation of a sinner. And if we call to mind that this visit of *Paul* to *Philippi*, had been induced by the effect of a vision, there will be no great violence to suppose, that the LORD's providence in thrusting *Paul* and *Silas* into this prison, was intimately connected with the LORD's leading them into *Macedon*. We may indeed enquire, speaking after the manner of men, how this rugged jailor, whom we may suppose by virtue of his office, rarely, if ever left the prison, should have heard *Paul* preach, except as by a means like this, *Paul* came into the prison to preach there?

But, Reader! do not in the earthquake of the prison, given in answer to the prayers and hymns of *Paul* and *Silas*, overlook the still greater earthquake the LORD made in the *jailors* soul.

No convulsion without, unaccompanied with trembling within, would have put such a cry as this awakened sinner uttered, when he sprang in and fell down before his prisoners. There was a divine light from the LORD shining inward upon his soul, before that he called for the common light of the house to lighten the wards of the prison. Convinced by this illumination of his own lost estate, and of those prisoners being the servants of the LORD, the language of his very soul earnestly desired to know what must be done for salvation.

The answer of *Paul* and *Silas* to the question is short, but sweet, and fully comprehensive to what the Gospel of salvation hath stated. Thus our dear LORD, during the days of his flesh, dwelt much upon it, See Matthew 8:10; Mark 9:23; Luke 17:6. And his servants following their LORD's steps, Acts 8:37; ACTS 14:9. But it should be remembered, that in all these instances, and numberless others, it is not meant a mere acknowledgment of the truths of the Gospel. In this sense, devils believe and tremble. But true faith is the conviction, not of the head, but the heart. And this is GOD's giving, not man's creating. *Unto you*, saith the Apostle, *it is given in the behalf of CHRIST, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake*, Philippians 1:29.

And let it be further observed, in the instance of this man, that his faith was manifested to be genuine by the effects which followed. For we are told, that *he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he, and all his, straightway*. Here were decided tokens of a work of sovereign grace wrought in his soul! He took them from the prison to his house. The stripes which he himself had so unmercifully laid on them, he now softened with the

oil of love. Their breadless prison was now changed into a bountiful supply of food. And the deadness and darkness of his mind, in a state of nature, was now done away for life and light in the soul. For it is said that *he rejoiced, believing in GOD with all his house*. Reader! behold what grace can accomplish! See here, what hath GOD wrought! Oh! who shall limit the sovereignty of the LORD, when the word of the LORD abounds with such wonderful instances of the power of grace.

ACTS 16:35-40

And when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants, saying, Let those men go. (36) And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. (37) But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. (38) And the sergeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans. (39) And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city. (40) And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

It is more than probable that the report of the earthquake had reached the ears of the magistrates. Indeed, it is hardly to be supposed possible that it should not. But neither earthquake, nor the relation made of the change wrought on the *jailor*, could effect any change upon the magistrates. Oh! how plainly, clearly, and fully, doth every circumstance in life preach the doctrine of distinguishing grace. Reader! it is very blessed to trace the LORD'S hand in all the LORD'S appointment; and, like *Paul* and *Silas*, watch the LORD'S leadings, both for removals or abidings, wheresoever his providence appoints.

REFLECTIONS

AMIDST many gracious improvements to be made of this Chapter, I would desire to remark the LORD'S merciful manifestations, in the instances here recorded of sovereign grace, in opening the heart of *Lydia* by the sweet constraining cords of love; and in alarming into conviction the heart of the *Jailor*, by the trembling convulsions of horror, and anguish of soul. Oh! how various, how wonderful, and how full of mercy in all, are the multiform ways of our wonder-working GOD! *He will beautify the meek with salvation.* He will pull down the strong-holds of sin in his people; and make the stubborn knee of the soul to bend to his power.

Reader! have you observed, carefully observed, what is said in this Chapter of GOD the SPIRIT? How truly awful to read of his forbidding the word to be preached in *Asia!* How strikingly solemn, that when the servants of the LORD assayed to go into *Bithynia*, the SPIRIT suffered them not. Reader! have you noticed these things? And can you notice such things without pausing to remark, yea, and to remark with astonishment, wonder, love, and praise also, that the LORD hath not long, long since forbidden it in our guilty land? Oh! the forbearance of our GOD to the present CHRIST-despising generation! LORD! let it never be said of our British *Judah*, *I will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it!* But, oh! in mercy grant, that *the goodness and long suffering of our GOD may lead to repentance.*

CHAPTER 17

CONTENTS

Paul and Silas prosecute their Circuit of preaching the Word through Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens. We have an awful Account of the latter.

ACTS 17:1-9

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: (2) And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, (3) Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. (4) And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. (5) But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. (6) And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; (7) Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. (8) And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. (9) And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

It doth not appear that *Paul*, or any of his company, preached in the two first places noticed in this Chapter. Neither have we any mention made of them any more than here, in all scripture. And what a striking consideration is it, that both those places are now, and for many a generation have been, in the hands of the Turks! I leave the Reader to his own reflections upon the subject.

Thessalonica was the chief city of *Macedonia*, larger than *Philippi*. The Jews, it should seem, were very numerous here, and had a Synagogue. And the Apostle, with *Silas*, and *Timotheus*, his companions, (see Acts 17:15) during their abode among the *Thessalonians*, attended the worship in the Synagogues, and most ably preached to them JESUS. I say most ably, for we have full proof of it in both Epistles to the *Thessalonians*, which *Paul* afterwards sent to the Church there. I need not make quotations from those blessed writings, for it would swell my *Poor Man's Commentary* to too large a size. Neither is it necessary, as the Reader can refer to both Epistles in proof. Indeed he would do well to read those Epistles, and this history together. But, of the Apostle's success, the first Chapter of the First Epistle to the *Thessalonians*, fully proves. And of his labors among them night and day, the second Chapter of the same Epistle very sweetly testifies.

But while we notice with delight and thankfulness the work of the LORD prospering under the hand of his servants, in the call of the Redeemer's people in *Thessalonica*, I pray the Reader no less to notice with myself the rejection made by the unbelieving Jews. Yes! The word of GOD so points out the solemn truth: and the earth in every age bears testimony in confirmation. As *Paul* said, so daily experience, both then and now, proves. *We are, (said he,) where we make manifest the savor of his knowledge in every place, a sweet savor of CHRIST in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one, we are the savor of death unto death: and to the other, the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? 2*

Corinthians 2:14-16. Oh! the wonders of distinguishing grace!

ACTS 17:10-15

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. (11) These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. (12) Therefore many of them believed; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. (13) But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people. (14) And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timothy abode there still. (15) And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timothy for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

I admire the scripture sense of nobility, in the account here given of the people of *Berea*. The word of GOD defines what it is to be truly noble, in both receiving with all readiness of mind the scriptures, and searching them daily. Reader! behold an honorable testimony the HOLY GHOST hath himself given to those who do receive, and daily search his sacred word. He saith elsewhere, *them that honor me, I will honor: and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed*, I Samuel 2:30. Oh! how will the word of GOD arise in judgment at the last day, to silence in everlasting confusion thousands, in whose houses the Bible indeed may be found, but so little used by them, that their condemnation may be written in letters upon the dust which covers it? Yea, strange to say, but by a contradiction in terms peculiarly known in the present hour, numbers profess great earnestness to send the Bible abroad to others, while thrown aside and never studied by

themselves! Oh! ye noble Bereans! I bless GOD the HOLY GHOST for the high honor the LORD of hosts himself hath here conferred upon you, in thus recording your true nobility in the word of his grace, and transmitting it to endless generations of the Church to be noticed by his people!

It may be proper for the Reader to observe, that when the Apostle speaks of the *Bereans*, as more noble than the people of *Thessalonica*, is meant the Jews of that place. And the commendation given the one, to the reproach of the other, is wholly in that; while the one searched the scriptures daily, and examined concerning what *Paul* and his companions said, whether those things were so; the other made no enquiry in the word of GOD, but condemned their doctrine without seeking any proof. But that this comparison did not refer to the Gentiles in *Thessalonica* is very certain, for before *Paul* and *Silas* left the *Thessalonians* to go to *Berea*, we are told, that among the devout Greeks which were believers, there was *a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few*, Acts 17:4. Indeed the Church planted in *Thessalonica* before *Paul* left it, and the two blessed Epistles afterwards sent to it by him, very plainly shew how GOD the HOLY GHOST had opened a door among them for their ministry, and given testimony to their labors by the word of his grace.

ACTS 17:16-21

Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. (17) Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. (18) Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the

resurrection. (19) And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? (20) For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. (21) (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)

We shall be better able to form our conclusions of the Apostle's ministry among the *Athenians*, if we previously take a short view of this people; and, under divine teaching, from what is here said of them, behold the wretched blindness, in respect to the true knowledge of GOD, in which this famous city was then covered.

Athens, at the time *Paul* was there, stood high in repute for learning and philosophy, and all human sciences then in esteem in the schools. It prided itself also upon religion. And from the intercourse with the Jews at Jerusalem in trade, they had acquired some knowledge of the scriptures of GOD. And as a free toleration was granted to every one to exercise whatever profession he thought proper of religion, the Jews had a Synagogue for worship in *Athens*. But the leading part of the people were divided, (as appears from this Chapter,) into those two great sects, the *Epicureans*, and the *Stoicks*. The former sprung from a certain philosopher (falsely so called) of the name of *Epicurus*, who lived about three hundred and forty years before the coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. His doctrine was, that there was no first cause; no GOD; but that the world came by chance. And that a man's own pleasure was the only object of pursuit. The *Stoicks* were the followers of a philosopher called *Zeno*. They took the name of *Stoic* from the Greek word *Stoa*, which signifies a

Porch. And as it is said that under a Porch *Zeno* used to walk, and teach his pupils his notion of things, they were called *Stoic* philosophers on that account. The tenets of this class of people differed from that of the *Epicureans*, in acknowledging a first cause. But they held that so much natural goodness was in every man, he had a power over his own passions; and he might, if he pleased, undergo the greatest pain with indifference. Such were the different characters of the Gentile philosophers with whom *Paul* had to contend; beside the blindness and prejudice of the ignorant Jews. No wonder so deeply distressed in soul the Apostle must have been, when he beheld the whole city sunk in idolatry, that his spirit could not refrain! Jeremiah 20:9. Reader! pause, if but for a moment, and contemplate, the awful effects of the fall! Oh! what an universal ruin was induced thereby, to our whole nature! The Church of God, as well as the whole mass of men, all involved in one common calamity: *darkness covering the earth, and gross darkness the people*, Isaiah 62:2.

ACTS 17:22-34

Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. (23) For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. (24) God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; (25) Neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; (26) And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; (27) That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: (28) For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your

own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. (29) Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. (30) And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: (31) Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. (32) And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. (33) So Paul departed from among them. (34) Howbeit certain men cleaved unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

It appears, from what is here said, that this meeting was by appointment. The dispute which *Paul* had occasionally entered into, with those different sects of Philosophers, as he met them in the market place; as well as with the Jews on the holy days in their Synagogue; had excited great curiosity among a set of people of whom we are told, that they spent their time in nothing else but an enquiry after novelty. They therefore took *Paul* to their public Court, called *Areopagus*; and then desired that he would deliver his opinion more fully, upon what he had before occasionally spoken of, JESUS and the Resurrection.

I do not think it necessary to go over the several parts of the Apostle's discourse, by way of illustration. Indeed this service is rendered needless, from the plain language *Paul* adopted. Every one must perceive, that in condemning the idolatry and superstition of this people, he hath fully shewn, the importance and necessity of the Gospel of CHRIST, But, for Readers of that class of persons for whom this *Poor Man's Commentary* is designed, I shall be doing a more acceptable

service, if from the whole of the Apostle's sermon, I endeavour to raise such improvement, as under the LORD's blessing, may be rendered profitable. And, in doing this, I venture to believe, We shall be acting in correspondence to the gracious design of GOD the HOLY GHOST, when the LORD caused this account of *Paul's* preaching at *Athens* to be recorded.

And here, at the very entrance on the subject of *Paul's* sermon, those two great points are discoverable, as though marked with a sun-beam. *The Apostle's spirit was stirred within him, when he saw the whole city given to idolatry.* But, in the close of the preaching, we discover the cause. *Certain men clave unto him, and believed.* Hence we learn here, as in the former instance at *Berea*, the LORD had a people at *Athens*, for whom *Paul's* spirit was stirred to speak. And here also, as there, mockers were found, to whom *Paul's* sermon became the ministry of condemnation. See Luke 10:5-16.

I know full well, by long experience, that the mind of every man by nature, is apt to revolt at this: neither, till grace hath entered the heart, can such truths be received. But, the approval or rejection of GOD's sovereignty, leaves the subject just where it found it. The LORD hath said, and who shall gainsay it: *My counsel shall stand, And I will do all my pleasure,* Isaiah 46:10. So that, *while the potsherd may, and will, strive with the potsherds of the earth;* and if the blows be violent against each other, like earthen vessels, both may break: *Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!* Isaiah 45:9.

That the LORD hath a Church in the world, whose recovery from the *Adam-nature* fall, all the ordinances and means of grace under the LORD, are directed to accomplish, is a truth, too fully, and too plainly revealed in the word of GOD, to require any further arguments to prove. And, that there are others of mankind, not included in this dispensation, the prayer of JESUS in his Mediator-office, as decidedly shews. *I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me. The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* Yea, the LORD, when speaking of GOD's decrees, in relation to discriminating grace, in separating *the precious from the vile*, makes use of the name *righteous*, as if (and which must be the case,) the very act resulted, from this divine perfection. *O righteous FATHER! the world hath not known thee!* John

17:9; John 14:25. And, after the review of this part of CHRIST'S prayer, who will venture to arraign GOD's justice? Who will assume the confidence of being more merciful than CHRIST? Who will impeach the divine sovereignty, when despisers of GOD, like those *Athenian* philosophers, are left to their scorn: and the *cause* in this instance, as in ten thousand others, is permitted to bring forth its natural effect? But, I pursue the subject no further. To the LORD I bring it. And with the LORD I leave it. Sweet and satisfying is that delightful scripture, though the destruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* followed it: *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right,* Genesis 18:25.

I beg the Reader not to overlook, how blessedly the Chapter is closed. While some mocked, and others proposed to themselves another hearing, before the Apostle departed

from them, *certain men clave unto him and believed*. And, the HOLY GHOST hath handed down the names of two of them with honorable testimony, to the latest generations. *Dionysius the Areopagite*, by which it is probable is meant the judge of the Court: and *Damaris* it is also likely, was a woman of some distinction. And the account adds, *and others with them*. How many, or how few, is not said. But we may safely conclude all within that promise, Acts 2:39. See also John 6:37.

REFLECTIONS

READER! do not fail to observe, how highly *Paul* was taught, so as to adapt his discourse to the different hearers among whom he exercised his ministry. To the Jews he preached CHRIST crucified, in all his fulness, suitableness, and all-sufficiency. To the *Bereans*, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free, still JESUS CHRIST became the one text, sum, and substance of the Apostle's sermons, in declaring to every hearer, CHRIST *the power of GOD, and the wisdom of, for salvation to every one that believeth*. To Philosophers, falsely so called, (for, professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,) who erected an altar to an Unknown GOD, *Paul* preached JESUS, and the Resurrection. He, and He alone, as the New Testament Altar, the High Priest, and the Sacrifice. In short, so highly taught was *Paul*, and so divinely commissioned by GOD the SPIRIT, that *he became all things to all men, that by all means he might save some*. And, what a sweet testimony the LORD gave to the word of his grace, when, even in *Athens*, he called out his own, and manifested the SAVOR of his name in every place!

Reader! let you and I learn, rightly to value our mercies. Oh! the blessedness of having the glorious Gospel of the blessed GOD made known, and proclaimed in his Churches. LORD! grant thy people grace to know the truth, and the truth to make them free. *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance!*

CHAPTER 18

CONTENTS

We have the great Apostle Paul here represented as working with his Hands for his daily Bread. He preacheth at Corinth. He is opposed by the Jews. He is encouraged by a Vision. He departs to Ephesus. Some Account of Apollos, Aquita, and Priscilla.

ACTS 18:1-4

After these things Paul departed from Athens and came to Corinth; (2) And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; because that (Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. (3) And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. (4) And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

It is truly delightful to observe, with what zeal the great Apostle to the Gentiles flew on the wings of Love and faith, to spread the adorable name of his Almighty LORD. Lately we found him at *Athens*. Now at *Corinth*, where he labored personally in the word, and doctrine, for nearly two whole years. And, from the blessed events which followed his

ministry, we find cause to praise the Lord for, sending him there. Yea, the whole Church of CHRIST, through all the intermediate ages, to the present hour, have cause so to do, and will to the remotest period of time ; since we owe those two divine Epistles written by *Paul*, under the HOLY GHOST'S dictating, to this source.

Corinth was a large populous city, situated on an isthmus of the sea, and the chief town of *Achaia*. It was remarkable for trade and commerce, which its vicinity to the sea highly favored. And, as it abounded with wealth and opulence, every species of luxury was known in it. Indeed, it was so remarkable for sin and uncleanness, that a Corinthian woman became proverbial, and meant the same thing, as a woman on the town. Here the LORD directed his servant *Paul*. And who shall calculate the extensiveness of his usefulness, in gathering sinners to CHRIST?

I beg the Reader not to overlook the beautiful portrait here drawn, of *Paul* the Apostle, in *Paul* the Tent-maker. He gives a faithful account of this in his tender and affectionate farewell, when he took leave of the Church at *Ephesus*. *Ye know, (said he,) from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the LORD with all humility of mind, and with many tears. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me, Acts 20:18-19; Acts 20:33-34.* The imagination can hardly picture to itself any thing more lovely, than to behold the Apostle filling up the intervals of his public ministry with private labors. No love of gain, no work of constraint, not for filthy lucre, did this great

Apostle labor, in the word and doctrine. As he told the Church of the *Thessalonians*, so every Church of CHRIST was equally dear to him. *Being affectionately* (said he) *desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted to you, not the Gospel of GOD only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travel, for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the Gospel of GOD,* 1 Thess. 2:8-11. Blessed servant of the LORD! How highly suited to so humble a Master?

Who those persons, *Aquila* and *Priscilla*, were, hath been the subject of much conjecture. But, it is not an object of moment further to know, than that they were believers in the LORD, well spoken of by *Paul*, in his Epistle to the Romans. (Romans 16:3-4). Their names written in the book of life. And now, and for ages past in spirit. Among *the spirits of just men made perfect*. Reader! how illustrious are those tent-makers, when beheld with an eye to CHRIST? How will they all look, when at the last day they shall appear, encircling HIM, who in the days of his flesh was contemptuously, though falsely called, *the Carpenter's Son*? Matthew 8:55.

ACTS 18:5-11

And when Silas and Timothy were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. (6) And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. (7) And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. (8) And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

(9) Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: (10) For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. (11) And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

If the Reader wishes to enter into a more particular account of *Paul's* preaching at *Corinth* than what is here stated, he will be able very easily to gather the chief sum and substance of what he discoursed upon, by referring to his Epistles to this Church. Indeed, it would be always profitable, when reading at any time in this part of the scripture history, the life and ministry of the Apostle; to consult and read with it, his both Epistles, which he afterwards sent to the Church at *Corinth*, when his personal labors among them were ended. One point in particular, we know *Paul* mostly dwelt upon, for he hath said as much; namely, CHRIST, and his cross. *For, (said he) I determined not to know any thing among you save JESUS CHRIST; and him crucified,* 1 Corinthians 2:2. There were a thousand subjects of holy joy and delight, the Apostle discovered in his adorable master. His Person, his GODHEAD, his manhood, his union of both: His Offices, Characters, Relations; all, and every one of these topics, *Paul* could have dwelt upon for ever. But, when speaking to poor, ruined, lost, and perishing sinners, like those *Corinthians* he knew CHRIST crucified was the one persuasive remedy of GOD's own providing, and the only one suited to their then-state and circumstances of ignorance and darkness: and therefore, here *Paul* fixed his eye, and here he found ample subject for his heart to enlarge upon, and recommend: and having in his own example found the blessedness of it, he labored to

enforce and recommend it to all others. And how sweetly, and persuasively he did it, those beautiful Epistles still shew?

It should seem, by what is here said, of the blasphemy of those Jews who opposed *Paul's* preaching, and the manner of shaking his raiment upon the occasion; that the Apostle was hardly put to it, and felt the bitterness of their persecution. And it should seem, that for the moment, he paused over the matter, as if more than half disposed in his own mind to leave *Corinth*. And yet he had enough to encourage him to abide there, in the conversion of *Crispus*, the chief ruler of the Synagogue, with all his house; and many *Corinthians* also. But, I pray the Reader not to lose sight of the grace and loving kindness of Jesus, in this night vision shewn *Paul*. For, that it was the LORD Jesus himself which so spake to the Apostle, is beyond all question. And, oh! how sweetly, powerfully, and persuasively, the LORD spake to him. How must it have refreshed and animated the Apostle? What new courage must it have inspired?

Reader! fail not to take to yourself, the consolation, such a view of the LORD'S watching over his people brings, for every emergency! Oh! could the faithful but behold things visibly as they are, how often, like the Prophet's servant, should we see ourselves surrounded with *horses of fire, and chariots of fire*; when to our poor, timid, and apprehensive minds, like him, through fear of man, we have been crying out: *Alas! how shall we do*, 2 Kings 6:14-17. Precious Jesus! do I not hear thee say, and do I not know, and at times feel the sweet power of thy words, while my LORD is saying it: *Sing ye to her a vineyard of red wine. I the LORD do keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day*,

Isaiah 27:2-3. I entreat the Reader to turn to those sweet scriptures also, Isaiah 51:7-13; Psalm 37 throughout.

And chiefly, ye faithful servants of my GOD, who minister in his sacred Name! (If peradventure one of that sacred order should glance at these my writings.) Oh! let this most interesting view, of the LORD JESUS comforting and encouraging his servant *Paul*, in this vision of the night, strengthen your hands and hearts with the same assurance. JESUS speaks as much now, as he did then. *Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee*, See Jeremiah 1:17-19. And, no doubt, but in this our day, and in the midst of the present CHRIST despising generation, the LORD hath much people to gather from the Midst of this our sinful land. Oh! that the consciousness of these things may stir up the hearts of his sent servants, to do as *Paul* did, tinder the LORD'S blessing; and remain as he did, if need be a whole year and six months, teaching the word of GOD among the people. And surely the LORD will defend, all that labor in his name, and are sent by him to the service, amidst all the conflicts they may sustain. *Persecuted they may be, but not forsaken: cast down, but not destroyed*, 2 Corinthians 4:9.

I hope the Reader will allow me to dwell a moment longer on a subject so truly interesting, as it concerns the Lord's people, as well as the LORD'S ministers. If Jesus told *Paul* that in a city like *Corinth* he had much people there; may we not hope, though sinful as a nation we are, yet many of GOD'S hidden ones are among us. And, by the *much people*, let it not be supposed that Jesus meant his people by right of creation. For, although indeed the earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness

thereof and all are his, as well by creation as redemption; yet there would have needed no vision of the night to have informed *Paul* of this, had that been all, for he knew it before. But very evidently, by the *much people* Jesus told *Paul* he had in *Corinth*; he meant his Church, his Chosen, according to Covenant settlements. That people whom the HOLY GHOST spake of, as a *people near unto him*, Psalm 148:14. Whom the LORD said, he had *formed for himself, and they should skew forth his praise*, Isaiah 43:21. A people by gift, John 17:6, by purchase, Isaiah 42:1, by conquest, Psalm 110:3. And Jesus knew them all by name, John 10:3. And they must all be gathered out, Ezekiel 34:13, and all pass again under the hand of him that telleth them: Jeremiah 33:13.

Reader! let us indulge the thought, for it is most pleasing. Paul knew them not. But Jesus did. *Elijah* was as unconscious in his day, what numbers the LORD had, when he thought himself single and alone, 1 Kings 19:10; 1 Kings 19:18. But, the LORD knoweth them that are his, 2 Timothy 2:19. And what makes the subject so very interesting and precious is, that while they are in the unregeneracy of their Adam-nature, and to all human observation alike indiscernible, as the ungodly among whom they dwell; yet Jesus hath his eye upon them for good, he keeps them from the unpardonable sin amidst all their sinning, he keeps them from going down to the pit, preserves them from death and the grave, watches over them for good in all their ungodliness, until the day of their effectual calling, when he brings them out by his HOLY SPIRIT; so that not one of them is lost for whom he died, and whom he hath received from his FATHER; but all are brought at length savingly home, where he comes to make up his Jewels,

Malachi 3:17. Precious LORD JESUS! I bless thee for this gracious vision to thy servant, the Apostle! And 'last thou not, dearest LORD, much people in the present day, in the city of this world? LORD! gather them out, and make them willing in the day of thy power! Take comfort my soul! He that conquered thy stubborn nature, can subdue others. No heart of stone, but CHRIST can take away, since he hath taken away thine!

ACTS 18:12-23

And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, (13) Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. (14) And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: (15) But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. (16) And he drove them from the judgment seat. (17) Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things. (18) And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow. (19) And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews. (20) When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; (21) But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus. (22) And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch. (23) And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

It should seem, that the vision which the LORD favored his servant the Apostle with, was but a little space (perhaps only

the preceding night) before this insurrection made by the Jews. Surely the LORD times his visits. And, we might observe, if our inattentive minds were but more awakened to these things, that JESUS is not more sweet than seasonable, in the manifestations he condescends to make to his people. No doubt, *Paul* felt the blessedness of what had passed between his LORD and himself in the night, when called to the exercises of the day. And, Reader! let me hope, that you and I are not unconscious of Him and his grace, who giveth *songs in the night*. Surely it is impossible to be so, while we have his promises in view. See a cluster of them, John 14:16-27.

I am at a loss how to explain, or even to account for, this vow of *Paul*. And I confess, that I should be inclined to think, that it was *Aquila* which made this vow, (as some have thought by putting the stop after *Priscilla*, and not *Aquila*,) and not *Paul*, did we not meet with a similar instance of the Apostle's, Acts 21:23 &c. When we call to mind, that *Paul* had been now in a state of conversion somewhat more than *fifteen years*; and that it was some time before this took place at *Cenchrea*, that he had written his Epistle to the Church at *Galatia*, in which he so strongly reproveth the mingling Jewish customs, with Gospel grace: when we recollect these things, how strange, and even contradictory doth it appear, that so great an Apostle should be found Complying with such weaknesses, Galatians 2:1. But, Reader! our LORD JESUS can, and I trust will, make such a view of the Apostle profitable to us both. For, when we behold the infirmity of the man, yea, so great a man and minister too, falling into such a weakness; surely it teaches us to cease from man, and look more to the LORD. What poor creatures the best of men are, and how strongly

the heart is prompted therefrom while contemplating human weakness, to lay hold on divine strength. Precious JESUS whatever tends to endear my LORD to the hearts and affections of his people, must be blessed. *Paul* himself rejoiced to be a fool, yea, any thing, or nothing, so that CHRIST became exalted! 2 Corinthians 11:21 and 2 Corinthians 12:5-11. See the Commentary, Acts 21:26.

If I detain the Reader a moment longer at this paragraph, it shall be only to remark, what extensive ground the Apostle traversed, in his zeal for the LORD'S glory, and the welfare of the LORD'S Church. Happy servant of an Almighty Master! While knowing that JESUS had much people in *Corinth*, how could he leave it before that he saw the Church formed there, and Elders ordained to supply his place, Acts 14:23. But, when this was done, and his mind directed to go elsewhere, like his LORD, he would of consequence say, *I must preach the kingdom of GOD to other cities also, for therefore am I sent:* Luke 4:43.

ACTS 18:24-28

And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. (25) This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. (26) And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. (27) And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: (28) For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

There is somewhat very interesting in the account here given of *Apollo*. His being instructed in the way of the LORD, means no more, I should apprehend, than that he had been taught, or catechized, (as the word is,) concerning the truths of the Gospel. Perhaps had learnt under the ministry of *John*, or his disciples. But, we may take occasion from hence to remark, how sweetly the LORD prepares the minds of his people for the reception of his divine truth. What a teachable disposition the LORD had given him, that while blessed with the gift of eloquence, and with an earnest desire to speak for the LORD; he submitted to be taught by those poor tent-makers, *Aquila* and *Priscilla*. He appears to have been so great a man, that many of the *Corinthians* preferred his preaching to *Paul's*. No doubt, this was from their ignorance. But it serves to shew the greatness of the man; 1 Corinthians 1:12. And, it may be observed, that it is the character of none but little minds, to refuse instruction, however weak or humble the channels through which it comes. *Apollo* found, that *Aquila* and *Priscilla* were better taught in divine things than himself. And, no doubt, while those humble persons ministered to his furtherance in knowledge; he strengthened their hands in his acquaintance with the Scriptures: and the LORD'S blessing upon them all, they became helpful to one another. And so is it now. While the LORD'S ministers are going forth, in their public labors for the people, the saints of GOD are holding up their hands by their private prayers for them, (as *Aaron* and *Hur* did the hands of *Moses* in the Mount: Exodus 17:12) in their ministry. And thus, as *Paul* said to the *Romans*, while the one imparted some SPIRITUAL gift, he received others in return: *that I may be comforted* (said Paul,) *together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me,* Romans 1:12.

REFLECTIONS

It must have been a blessed time in the Church, when Ministers, ordained of GOD the HOLY GHOST, found their minds disposed in the intervals of public service, to labor in private for their daily bread, that they might not make the Gospel of GOD chargeable to any. And we find, that so far was this employment in honest industry, for their own maintenance, from damping the ardor of their zeal for GOD, that while *Paul* wrought in tent-making for his daily bread; his soul burned with an holy flame, to preach CHRIST to the people. Oh! that all the faithful ministers of the sanctuary now, were under the same blessed influence as *Paul* was *then*, when *he was pressed, as it is said, in SPIRIT, and testified to the Jews that JESUS is the CHRIST.*

Reader! let you and I bless GOD our SAVIOR, that in such a city as *Corinth*, the LORD had a Church: yea, much people. Let us love the LORD JESUS, for granting so sweet and timely a vision, to tell *Paul* this, as is here recorded. And, let us ponder well the record, as it concerns the Church of GOD, in all ages. Depend upon it, the same is now, and so will be, is the very end of time. JESUS hath much people in every city where he sends his Gospel, his word, his servants. In this our city, our sinful land, which like *Corinth* is full of uncleanness, luxury, pride, and every evil. His people are in the midst of many people, as the remnant of *Jacob*. They are like sparks, among the stubble as pure seed, among the tares. Yea, how many of them, all of them indeed, originally and by their Adam-nature living during the days of their unregeneracy, in the same sin, and under the influence of the same corruptions. But Jesus

will search and seek them out. They are his, and he must gather them. The FATHER gave them to him in charge, and they must all pass again under the hand of him that telleth them. They are the purchase also of his blood, and too dearly bought to lose one of them; too dearly loved to be indifferent about them. And, GOD the SPIRIT hath marked them to the day of redemption. Precious LORD Jesus! cause all thy faithful ministers to keep these things in remembrance, and like Paul when oppositions from men or devils arise, to call to mind this sweet vision of their LORD, as though they still heard JESUS say: Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace, for I have much people in this city!

CHAPTER 19

CONTENTS

Paul passeth through Ephesus. The HOLY GHOST blesseth his Ministry. A Tumult is excited in consequence of Paul's preaching. The Town-clerk appeaseth the People.

ACTS 19:1-7

And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, (2) He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. (3) And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. (4) Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. (5) When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (6) And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake

with tongues, and prophesied. (7) And all the men were about twelve.

This is a very interesting record of the Church. I beg the Reader's close, attention to it. There is no little difficulty in discovering, what class of disciples those were. It is said, that they had been baptized into John's baptism; and yet had never heard, whether there were any HOLY GHOST. It is very strange this, because John the Baptist himself, is said to have been filled with the HOLY GHOST, even from his mother's womb, Luke 1:15. And, it is most certain, that John entered on his office of preaching repentance, and commanding the people to believe on him that should come after him, by the immediate influence and direction of the SPIRIT. Yea, John declared, that his knowledge of the Person of CHRIST his LORD, was wholly derived from the SPIRIT'S teaching. He that sent me to baptize with water, (said John,) the same said unto me; upon whom thou shalt see the SPIRIT descending and remaining on him, the same is He which baptizeth with the HOLY GHOST. And I saw, (said John,) and bare record that this is the SON of GOD, John 1:25-34. So that John preached of the HOLY GHOST, as well as of CHRIST, to all the people. And John taught those he baptized, to observe the vast difference between CHRIST'S Person and Ministry, and his, by this very circumstance, that JESUS baptized his people with the HOLY GHOST. I indeed, (said John,) baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the HOLY GHOST and with fire, Matthew 3:11. All these things very fully prove, that as John preached of the HOLY GHOST, all his disciples must have heard of Him; and therefore the expression here used, that they had not so much as heard

whether there were any HOLY GHOST, could not possibly mean, that they were altogether ignorant of His Being, and GODHEAD.

I am inclined to think, that those disciples were such as had never known, or experienced the gifts and graces of the HOLY GHOST, upon their own hearts and consciences: and therefore might, in the strictest sense of the words, be truly said to have never heard, in respect to any Saving knowledge, whether there were any HOLY GHOST, And, Reader! pause over the thought, (for it is a very solemn one,) and say, how many in this our day, who like those men are called *disciples*, and like them are supposed to *believe also*, who, if called upon; could give no better account of themselves than these persons. They are CHRISTIANS, because born under the meridian of Christianity. They are believers, as far as creeds and prayer-books can make them so, and no further. They assent to the truths of the Gospel because they have never troubled themselves to enquire about them; and therefore take them up on trust. And, thus thousands live, and it is to be feared, thousands die; as ignorant whether there be any HOLY GHOST, as to any real conversion of the heart towards GOD, by His sovereign and Almighty Power, as those unenlightened nations of the earth, to whom the LORD hath not sent the Gospel. Reader! hath the LORD made you to differ from such? Have you received the HOLY GHOST since you learnt of him only by the hearing of the ear; or formed your belief from the creed or the prayer-book?

If my views of the persons here spoken of in this Chapter, whom *Paul* found at *Ephesus*, be correct; what a beautiful account is given of the real conversion of the heart towards GOD? Surely here was a renewal of the day of *Pentecost*. It

was not equal in number, neither was the descent of GOD the HOLY GHOST accompanied with equal splendor and glory; but the sovereignty of his power, and the blessed effects of his grace, were the same. Some have thought, that those persons were truly converted, when the Apostle met them; and that what is said here of their ignorance of the HOLY GHOST, is not intended to say, that they had never heard of the HOLY GHOST in his divine office of *convincing of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment*; but as ordaining to the ministry. And that now meeting with *Paul*, and receiving the extraordinary gifts of GOD the SPIRIT, they entered on the ministry. And this opinion is formed from what is said, that when the HOLY GHOST came on them, they were blessed with the same gifts as the Apostles; *for they spake with tongues and prophesied*, Acts 2:4.

I am far from setting up any opinion of mine, in opposition to this. And, it is possible, that this might be the case. But, there is another difficulty which then ariseth; in that they were re-baptized. It doth not appear, that any of the Eleven Apostles had any other water baptism than *John's*, if they had that; for even of that we are not certain. The LORD commanded them to baptize others, when they should have been baptized with the HOLY GHOST but we never read of any water baptism enjoined them by the LORD for themselves, Compare Matthew 28:19 with Acts 1:5. Nay, CHRIST himself had no other water-baptism than *John's*, Matthew 3:13 to the end. And there was no water-baptism made use of at the day of *Pentecost*, in the three thousand the HOLY GHOST came down upon, in that glorious display of his power. So that, on the supposition, that these persons were converted before *Paul* met them, and

were now ordained to the ministry by the HOLY GHOST; the re-baptism is totally different from what was observed by CHRIST and his Apostles. The Apostles were all acquainted with the regenerating influence of the HOLY GHOST, before their ordination to the ministry on the day of *Pentecost*. See, in proof, John 14:17. And their qualification for the ministry, JESUS bid them wait for at Jerusalem. See Luke 24:49. But having stated both opinions, I leave the Reader, under divine teaching, to form his own judgment, only first praying that the LORD JESUS may bring the souls of all his redeemed, under the continual and unceasing baptisms of GOD the HOLY GHOST!

ACTS 19:8-20

And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. (9) But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. (10) And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. (11) And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: (12) So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. (13) Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. (14) And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. (15) And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? (16) And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. (17) And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. (18) And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. (19) Many of them also which used curious arts brought

their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. (20) So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

I beg the Reader to remark with me, how uniformly, through the whole history of the Church, may we trace the different effects which the LORD the HOLY GHOST hath declared should follow the ministration of his word. Let the Bible be opened at any part whatever, this line appears as luminous and shining as though drawn with a sun beam. To one class of hearers, it becomes *the savor of death unto death*. To the other, *of life unto life*, 2 Corinthians 2:16. And the same is equally visible in every congregation in the present hour, wheresoever *the truth, as it is in JESUS*, is faithfully dispensed. We may behold *some* melting under the word, awakened, interested, and not unfrequently alarmingly concerned, in enquiries for *the one thing needful*. While *others*, under the same word, as insensible, and, as it is here said, *hardened, and believing not; yea, speaking evil of this way before the multitude*. Can the word of GOD'S grace make a more decided appeal than when scripture truths so uniformly concur, from age to age, with common experience?

I do not think it necessary in a work of this kind, to enter into the minutia of the several things in the historical, part of the subject. The opposition *Paul* met with from those Jews, and the LORD'S success upon his labors to confirm the word, are beautifully blended, to shew how unavailing the contest was, when the LORD is gathering out his people. The seven wretched sons of this *Sceva*, stand forth an awful monument in the history of the Church, what awful delusions the human mind is capable of falling under. But the LORD hath shewn in

all such instances, that *no weapon formed against CHRIST and his Church, can prosper. Every tongue that shall rise in judgment against the LORD and his people, must be condemned*, Isaiah 54:17.

ACTS 19:21-41

After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome. (22) So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timothy and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season. (23) And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. (24) For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; (25) Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. (26) Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: (27) So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at naught; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshipeth. (28) And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. (29) And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theater. (30) And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not. (31) And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theater. (32) Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together. (33) And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defense unto the people. (34) But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. (35) And when the town clerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man

is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshiper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter? (36) Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. (37) For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. (38) Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another. (39) But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. (40) For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse. (41) And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

Without, going over a large tract of ground, on the subject of idolatry, which the history of those verses would lead into, I shall only detain the Reader with one general observation upon the whole, which, under divine teaching, may enable both the Writer and Reader of this *Poor Man's Commentary*, to gather sufficient improvement to bless GOD in being delivered from such awful delusions as are here shewn.

When we see, as in the melancholy instance before us, to what a desperate degree of ignorance and idolatry the mind of man is capable of being driven; and when we behold at the same time, as in the case of *Paul*, the vast difference when a soul is brought from darkness to light, and as the Apostle himself expresseth it, *is turned from idols to serve the living and true God*; (1 Thessalonians 1:9) it becomes a subject of infinite moment to ask the cause? No two beings under the sun can differ more than what is here represented. Here is a nation so sunk in the grossest idolatry, that even an image becomes the object of all the world's worshipping as they

thought, and here is an Apostle of CHRIST going forth with his life in his hand, to preach JESUS to the people.

It becomes a subject of infinite importance, in tracing effects to their cause, to explain such a mystery. For when we see the human mind so immediately opposed in one to another, it is very obvious there must be some source predisposing to this end. And happy it is for us the Gospel of CHRIST very fully and satisfactorily explains it.

There we learn, that in the one common nature of our fallen estate in Adam, by his apostasy, the whole race became equally involved in ruin. All equally *dead in trespasses and sins*; and all equally incompetent, while remaining unquickened by the SPIRIT, to any one act of SPIRITUAL life. The Church of GOD, being given by the FATHER to the SON before all worlds, and consequently before *sin entered into the world, and death by sin*, and the SON of GOD having undertaken to recover his Church from the Adam-state of, ruin in which she was involved at the fall in the common mass of nature, *in the fulness of time*, as it is called in scripture language, the SON of GOD comes in grace and truth, *to do away sin by the sacrifice of himself*, and by his Holy Spirit he quickens the souls of his redeemed, and brings them out of darkness, and the shadow of death, and breaks their bands asunder. I stay not to produce the whole proof of these things, for this would swell my pages indeed. But I refer the Reader, in confirmation, to some few of the more plain and conclusive. See Romans 3:10-19; Ephesians 1:4; Romans 5:12; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 9:26; Ephesians 2:1-5; Psalm 107:14.

Without amplifying the subject, this statement (and which by the way let it be considered is wholly scriptural,) is enough in testimony to show wherefore it is that the souls of some, such as *Paul* and his companions, in this history became quickened, regenerated, and made new creatures in CHRIST JESUS. Hence they hear and *know the joyful sound, and walk in the light of GOD's countenance. In the name of JESUS they rejoice all the day, and in his righteousness they are exalted,* Psalm 89:15-16. Every thing in CHRIST becomes lovely, and is endeared to their view. His person, His work, His glory, His offices, His character, His relations; all that He is its himself; all that He is to his people; what He hath done for them, and what He is still doing for them, and will do for them to all eternity; these glorious subjects, when they are themselves quickened to a new and spiritual life, are opened to their minds, and cause them *to rejoice with joy, unspeakable and full of glory!* On the other hand, the souls of others remaining in the Adam-nature of a fallen, sinful, and lifeless state, unawakened, unrenewed, uncalled, the whole of their apostasy remains, and, as *the carnal mind is enmity against GOD,* they not only are insensible to their own corruptions by nature, and the want of grace to bring them out of it, but *they hate to be reformed, and cast GOD's words behind them.* I stay not here again to produce all the evidences of these solemn truths which might be brought forward, but refer only to a few, Romans 8:5-8; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 1:22-25; Psalm 51:17.

If it be said, (as indeed it hath been said by presumptuous minds,) how is this to be explained on principles of equity? The answer is at hand, and indeed hath been already given. *The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his*

works. Psalm 145:14. It must be a righteous act in recovering the LORD'S people from the *Adam*- nature of a fallen state, because the SON of GOD, in that nature, hath bought their persons out of the hands of law and justice, and GOD makes good his covenant-promises to his dear SON. And it must be a righteous act in leaving those to their sins who delight in them, seeing it is in this instance, as in every other, only permitting every *cause* to produce its own natural *effect*: And in relation to those before whom the word of grace is dispensed, and where, instead of softening their hearts, it only acts as heat upon circumstances, to harden them the more, and raiseth their greater bitterness of spirit against the truths of GOD, it tends but to confirm the truth of scripture, in skewing to what a desperate condition man is sunk by the fall, and what wonders of grace must it be in every instance, when a poor sinner is brought out of it.

Reader! ponder well the subject. And if so be the LORD, in rich, free, sovereign mercy, hath brought you from the *Adam*-nature in which you was born, in which you lived, and, but for the gracious provision made in CHRIST, in which you would have died; calculate if you can the vast amount of the immense mercy! Well may every child of GOD take to himself that sweet scripture, and make it his daily song during the whole time-state of his pilgrimage. *Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling,* Psalm 2:11.

REFLECTIONS

SEE, my soul, in the history of those disciples *Paul* met at *Ephesus*, how easy it is to have a name to live, and yet be virtually dead before GOD. Oh! how sweet the baptisms of the

SPIRIT. LORD, let my soul seek thy daily baptisms, thy sweet anointings, without which all outward ordinances, how good soever in themselves, will profit nothing!

Oh! for a portion of the same SPIRIT as *Paul* had, when speaking boldly for the space of three months in the Synagogue, and contending for *the faith once delivered to the saints*. Oh! how cold and languid are our warmest arguments, compared to the burning zeal of this Apostle. Ye ministers of my GOD! beg of Him who touched the Prophet's mouth, to touch yours, that the words of GOD's grace may not freeze as they drop, but from being warm yourselves, your souls may kindle others, and from *the abundance of the heart the mouth may speak*.

Blessed LORD JESUS! we would praise thee, that even in the darkest days, as here, so now, thy miracles of grace upon the heart are plainly distinguished from all counterfeits, like those vagabond Jews. Thy work, Almighty LORD, in conversion, manifests the people of thy love from all idol worshippers. Great is the cry of the world in their various schemes of creature perfection. But, oh! thou dear. LORD! do thou hold up thy faithful servants, as thou didst *Paul*, by giving testimony to the word of thy grace, and granting signs and wonders in the conversion of the heart to GOD, to follow a faithfully preached Gospel.

CHAPTER 20

CONTENTS

Paul *goeth to Macedonia. He preacheth at Troas, and celebrates the LORD'S Supper. A Youth falls front a Window while Paul was long preaching, and is taken up as dead. Paul restores him to Life. He gives a Charge to the Elders at Miletus, and enters into a Ship.*

ACTS 20:1-6

And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia. (2) And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, (3) And there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia. (4) And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. (5) These going before tarried for us at Troas. (6) And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.

It appears from the preceding Chapter; that *Paul* had determined upon a visit to *Macedon* (Acts 19:21-22). Probably however, this uproar prompted him the rather to hasten his departure. However he went not away before that he had called together the people to take an affectionate farewell of them. And it should seem that this was always the Apostle's custom. For wherever he went, it was as with his life in his hand. And when at any time he took leave of the brethren, he knew not whether he should ever see them again. It is very interesting the parting interview of a faithful minister and a beloved congregation. How truly lovely is that of *Moses*, which is called the blessing wherewith *Moses*, the man of GOD, *blessed the children of Israel before his death*, Deuteronomy 33. Such *Joshua* also, Joshua 23 and 24. And, in short, all the

servants of JESUS. But, Reader! what a farewell was that of JESUS himself? John 13 and 14 &c.

The exercise of Paul's ministry through this circuit, we are told, was with much exhortation. And, if we may form a judgment from the specimen given in the close of this Chapter, when addressing the Elders at *Miletus*; what a lovely part of the Apostle's labors must this have been? They who have been curious to trace the journeys of the Apostle, have formed to view no small tract of land, the Apostle went over during this circuit. But, I can only refer the Reader to the Scriptural statement of it; together with the same account of his companions. See 2 Corinthians 8:1-6; 2 Corinthians 9:1-5; Romans 16:21; 1 Corinthians 16:3-4.

ACTS 20:7-12

And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. (8) And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. (9) And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. (10) And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. (11) When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. (12) And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

I admire the expression, *the first day of the week*; meaning the day in which the LORD JESUS arose from the dead. For the whole body of believers from that time, made it the great day of public meeting. And, from that period, they considered it for their sabbath. And before the beloved Apostle left the

Church upon earth, to join the Church in glory, the name by which this first day was known, was the LORD'S day. Hence *John* saith: *I was in the SPIRIT on the LORD'S day*, Revelation 1:10. And, as in the first ages of the Church, the name by which the holy Supper CHRIST instituted was called, *breaking of bread and prayer*: Acts 2:42. So, before *Paul's* ministry ended, the believers called this solemn service, *the LORD'S Supper*, 1 Corinthians 11:20. And what can be more sweet and suited, in reference to both? Is it not the LORD'S day, and the LORD'S Supper? Is not JESUS LORD of both; yea, the sum, and substance of both? Reader! do you not love the LORD'S day, and the LORD'S Supper? And can any thing be more suited, than that all true believers, celebrate the Supper of the LORD on the LORD'S day? Not indeed to the exclusion of other days, when the LORD invites his members to his table. All days, and all times, are blessed, when *the King sitteth at his table*, and when the sweet *Spikenard* of his people's graces, planted and brought into exercise by His SPIRIT, *send forth the smell thereof*: Song of Solomon 1:12; 1 Corinthians 10:16. But, there is a peculiar sweetness and sacredness, on the LORD'S day, and is endeared to the LORD'S people by every tie of affection. And, what blessedness have the saints of GOD in all ages, yea, the whole Church of GOD, during the whole time, state of her pilgrimage here below, found in it? The Jews say, that it was the first day when JEHOVAH, in his three-fold character of Persons, went forth, in the creation of the world. And we know, that it was the first day when the SON of GOD, in our nature, triumphed by his resurrection; over death, hell, and the grave. And, is it not the first day as such of the everlasting world to all his redeemed? Hail! thou holy day of

the LORD! Sweet pledge and emblem of the eternal and unceasing Sabbatism of heaven!

The farewell sermon of Paul was lengthened to the midnight hour. His heart was with the people, and he knew not how to leave off; It is truly blessed, when the sent servants of the Lord, like the Apostle, are so affectionately desirous of the flock of CHRIST, as not to impart only the Gospel of GOD, but their own souls also, because they are dear to them. See a beautiful portrait of this in the Apostle himself: 1 Thessalonians 2 throughout. And it is a lovely sight, when a congregation, under the teachings and influences of GOD the SPIRIT, hang upon the Preacher's words, and forget the length of the discourse in the sweetness of it, from CHRIST being both text, sermon, and substance. Reader! think, what a Preacher must have been JESUS himself! Look at one instance of the LORD'S preaching, when the people pressed upon him to hear his word? Luke 5:1.

I stay not to make any further observation on this certain young Man's infirmity of sleeping under the word, than to remark, his sin, and the LORD'S mercy. Had not the LORD'S grace been greater than even his undeservings, what would have been the consequence? The Evangelists have been particular, in telling the Church how the disciples slept, when CHRIST was in his agony. But, the LORD himself hath taught us from what quarter the temptation came. It was *the hour of the power of darkness*, See Matthew 26:36-45; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-53. And who shall say, even now in the present hour, how often the deadly foe attempts to drench the people of GOD in sleep, when sitting under the word, in the house of prayer, to render it unfruitful? Let the LORD'S

people seek grace from the LORD, to counteract Satan's devices. *Pray, saith JESUS, that ye enter not into temptation,* Luke 22:40. And, every sinner that reads this history of *Eutychus*, (though his life was restored to him by a miracle) hath reason to tremble, if sleeping in the house of GOD, conscious that he thereby insults the majesty of the LORD, and exposes himself both to the divine wrath, and to the devil's devices, Mark 4:15.

ACTS 20:13-16

And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot. (14) And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene. (15) And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day we came to Miletus. (16) For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

It is delightful, to behold the zeal of the Apostle and his companions, in going from place to place, to preach the Gospel of the ever-blessed GOD. He had not been at Jerusalem for several years before (perhaps four). His object, in getting there before the feast of Pentecost, was not, it should seem, to keep the feast after the manner of the Jews; for these things he had done with: but his wish was, to avail himself of the great concourse of persons, which came from all parts at those festivals, to trade together: that he might preach to them Jesus. And, as that feast had been made so blessed, by the first open display of GOD the HOLY GHOST; no doubt, Paul had it in remembrance, and had his heart directed to the Lord with hopes of distinguishing mercy, at such a

time. Reader! it is blessed to eye the Lord's hand, in all our movements. And sure I am, our souls are never more likely to enjoy the Lord's mercies, than when the Lord is preparing our souls to be looking for them. Indeed the hour comes; (and well is it for his people that he doth,) when our forgetful and inattentive hearts are not looking for him, Isaiah 65:1. But, those mercies are doubly sweet, which, by the Lord's prompting our hearts to seek, are first prayed for, then watched for, and then received at the Lord's hand, and sweetened and sanctified with the Lord's, blessing. Oh! how ten-fold blessed are all mercies, where Jesus is seen in all, and Himself enjoyed in all! Reader! are you acquainted with those soul-enjoyments?

ACTS 20:17-38

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. (18) And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, (19) Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: (20) And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, (21) Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. (22) And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: (23) Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. (24) But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. (25) And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. (26) Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. (27) For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. (28) Take heed therefore unto

yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (29) For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. (30) Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. (31) Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. (32) And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. (33) I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. (34) Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. (35) I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. (36) And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. (37) And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, (38) Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

It hath been thought by some, that *Miletus* was near fifty miles front *Ephesus*; though others make it no more than *thirty*. But, even thirty miles in those days, was a great distance for the Elders to attend the Apostles' visitation. Reader! you and I have cause to bless GOD the HOLY GHOST, both for this meeting of the Apostle with the Bishops and Deacons, and for having caused this precious sermon of the Apostle's to be recorded. What refreshment hath the Church in all the intermediate ages to the present hour found from it? And what numbers yet unborn will arise to enjoy the blessing of it? Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1.

I cannot, propose to the Reader to offer any observations by way of comment, on *Paul's* discourse. It is in itself so truly

Apostolical, and carries with it in every verse, such evident marks of being the immediate work of inspiration; that it can need nothing more, than for the same Almighty LORD, which guided *Paul's* mouth, to accompany the reading of it to the heart of his people who peruse it, or hear it read, to make, it a sweet savour of CHRIST in every place. Oh! that all the sent servants of JESUS were so taught, so helped to speak, and so enabled to appeal to the hearts and consciences of the people, among whom they minister, in proof of their honesty and faithfulness, as *Paul* here did. What a Church of CHRIST would it be were servants so to labour? What a visitation would it form, were the meeting and the parting become so tender and affectionate? Happy period of the LORD'S household! When shall the LORD'S people behold the return of days so truly blessed?

Though I venture not to attempt any remarks on *Paul's* sermon, (perfectly aware, that the beautiful simplicity which runs through the whole of it, from beginning to end, would suffer from the least alteration made in it;) yet, I would beg to point to the Reader some of the more prominent parts of it, as they strike me, which serve to set the whole in a more interesting point of view; and which, under GOD'S teaching, may render it more profitable, both to the Reader's apprehension, and my own.

And here I request him first to notice, that it was not only the parting farewell discourse of an Apostle to the Church at *Ephesus*, rendered dear, to him, by a three years ministry, exercised among them; but it became infinitely more interesting, in that it appealed to their consciences, that he had preached none but CHRIST. This, Reader, appears to me,

to be the grand and distinguishing feature, of this very blessed discourse. I am free to allow all that may be demanded, of affection, and tenderness, and love, which ought to distinguish a Church of JESUS, between a minister and the people. But, when this is heightened in the utmost extent the imagination can heighten it, the whole is nothing in my view, compared to what ought to mark the faithfulness of the servant of the LORD, in ministering in holy things. It is the LORD'S work, and to the LORD, the servant is to be everlastingly looking. The tenderest sympathy and affection to the people can admit no departure from steadfastness here. Nay, without a constant eye to this first leading principle of duty, it is possible, that a mistaken tenderness to the people, might induce an inattention to the LORD. The Apostle hath in another place, stated this idea of service, when he saith: *not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing GOD. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the LORD, and not unto men: knowing that of the LORD ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the LORD CHRIST, Colossians 3:22-24*, And hence, what a solemn appeal the Apostle makes in the midst of his discourse, on this ground; that *lie was pure from the blood of all men, because he had kept back nothing that was profitable to them, but had declared the whole counsel of GOD*. Reader! ponder over the view. Think what a blessed frame of mind *Paul* was in, when he thus spake. It is not indeed the privilege of all the faithful ministers of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, so to take a farewell of the Church and people. But, amidst the consciousness of a thousand infirmities, as the believer finds them daily in his heart; it is, it must be, truly blessed, when he can, and doth

appeal, in the first and highest of all concerns, in the humble hope, that his preaching hath been wholly JESUS.

Having looked at *Paul's* sermon in this first; best, and most important point, we, may look at it in another; I mean, the unbounded affection expressed in it, to the Church. Reader! depend upon it, there is a relationship, between the members of CHRIST'S mystical body, that infinitely surpasseth all the mere natural ties of common life. They are kindred souls. Their union with each other, begins in CHRIST the Head; and is kept alive in Him, and by Him. And, it is an union, which is indissoluble and everlasting. Death, which puts an end to all the affinities of this world, makes no alteration here. Nay, as it is with the glorious Head of the body, to which the Church is but betrothed in the time-state of her existence, and the compleat union begins but at death, when brought home to the marriage supper of the lamb in heaven: so, by the several members, their perfect union, freed from all the interruptions arising from a sinful, sorrowful body, can only be truly said to be pure and unbroken, *when that which is perfect is come, and that which is but in part is done away*. And, under this view, what very sweet and precious apprehensions of the mind, Must the faithful servant of the LORD JESUS feel towards the several members of CHRIST'S body, among whom he ministers, and over whom, as *Paul* here, beheld it, the LORD makes his ministering servants Overseers,

Whoever reads the several parts of this blessed discourse of the Apostle with an attention to this particular will discover, how much the heart of *Paul* was in all he said in his earnestness for their SPIRITUAL and eternal welfare; and that his very soul, was going forth, in the most unbounded

affection towards them. He calls upon them to observe, that the whole drift of his preaching was to hold up CHRIST. He expressed his jealousy, lest any other subject at any time, from any quarter whatever, should be brought forward, to mingle with this one, this only one of salvation. He foresaw by the SPIRIT of prophecy the Lotto had given him, (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 12:10) that there would be grievous wolves entering in among them; yea, some *among themselves would arise*, from the corruptions of nature and the temptations of Satan, *which would speak perverse things*. Paul therefore charges them to watch, and remember, how for the space of three whole years, he had been preaching CHRIST, and CHRIST only; and that even with all the tears of entreaty, in holding him up in his beauty, glory, suitableness, and all-sufficiency!

Reader! I beseech you, look over this sermon of *Paul's*; yea, look over the whole preachings and writings of *Paul*, with an eye to those things, and then judge, under the LORD's teachings, for yourself, whether CHRIST and him crucified, CHRIST and him glorified, is not the whole of all, 1 Corinthians 2:2; Galatians 6:14; Colossians 3:11. All the sweet and precious conclusions of the Apostle's Epistles, are spoken of by him, and recommended by him, as the *effects*, and not the party *cause*, of the real conversion of the heart towards GOD. *Paul* makes CHRIST to be, in all his Sermons, and in all his Epistles, what JEHOVAH, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, made Him, from all eternity; the One, and only one, great and compleat Ordinance of heaven, for salvation to every one that believeth. Indeed, as another great Apostle said, and the faithful gone to glory all along have proved, by experience; *salvation is in no other: neither is there any other name under*

heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, Acts 4:12. And, if these things are so, as the word of God, in every part 'beareth witness, how sad, how wretchedly sad, must it be, to preach any other, which can only tend to mislead, and carry sinners From CHRIST, instead of leading them to CHRIST. Had Paul studied oratory, who more eloquent? Had he meant to, gratify men's ears, instead of awakening under GOD the SPIRIT their souls; who better able? But, conscious that he was always addressing men, who by nature were all guilty, and polluted before GOD; he came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom; but simply preached CHRIST, And, who shall count the honor which GOD the HOLY GHOST put upon his labors, in the vast success of his ministry to souls?

I must not enlarge. But *Paul's* sermon leads to an almost endless subject, in marking the beauties of it. What an affecting account the Apostle gives of himself; his watchings, his humbleness, bonds, imprisonments! The earnestness of his labors, with tears, amidst temptations, persecutions, and conflicts: and how the Hoar GHOST witnessed to his trials in every city, which awaited him! And with what holy triumph he viewed the whole, now going bound as he was, to *Jerusalem*; declaring that none of these things moved him, not counting his life dear to himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received from the LORD JESUS! Faithful servant of thy GOD! thou Mist indeed long since finished thy course with joy, and hast entered into the joy of thy LORD! Oh! that the LORD would raise up many a *Paul*, in the present dark day of the Church, to testify *the Gospel of the grace of GOD!* 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

Reader! let us not overlook the sweet prayer at parting, when the Apostle tore himself away, as it were, from the embraces of the people. The LORD, who gave the Apostle grace to preach, gave both him and them, the grace also to pray. Such a sermon, could come only from the LORD. And, though the prayer is not recorded, yet there can be no doubt, but it was a very blessed one, for it could only come from the LORD too. And what a place of weeping was it Made! But the tears were holy tears, like *the spiced wine of the pomegranate*. JESUS, who wept himself at the grave of *Lazarus*, hath sweetly sanctified all the sorrows of his people. And how have all those tears on this occasion since terminated in joy? How Hath *Paul*, and the gracious party which were then with him, long sung together their hymns of everlasting glory, and praise, around the throne of GOD, and the LAMB; *where all tears are wiped away from all eyes, and sorrow and sighing are done away for ever*, Revelation 7:9 to the end.

REFLECTIONS

READER! *let* you and I behold with delight, what is here said, of the Apostle and his companions, celebrating the LORD's supper on the LORD'S day. Let it encourage our hearts to delight in that sweet service, that we may be often found, in breaking of bread, and of prayer. And do thou, LORD Jesus, always preside over those assemblies of thy people. Oh! the blessedness, when by faith we receive the gracious emblems at thine own hand! Then will it always be a feast upon a sacrifice. CHRIST our New Testament Altar, our High Priest, and Passover sacrificed for us. A sweet commemorating, communicating, refreshing, strengthening Ordinance. Yea, we

shall say *the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of CHRIST? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of CHRIST?*

Who that reads of the *Eutychus* in this Chapter, and beholds the *Eutychus* in the many instances of the present day, but must be ready to cry out; *what meanest thou, O sleeper: arise, call upon thy GOD that thou perish not?* What, if such sleepers in the house of GOD were to open their eyes no more, until awakening in eternity? -Is the sanctuary of the LORD, and the place where his honor dwelleth, a fit place to sleep in? Can it be possible, for men to snuff at Gob's ordinances, and say: *Oh what a weariness is it! When will the Sabbath be gone'?*

Let my soul be relieved, from such a contemplation as the weary and the sleepy in the house of GOD, to look once more at *Paul*, and the Elders of *Miletus* at this most refreshing meeting, described in this Chapter. Ye servants of the LORD, who are sent by Him to minister in his Name; and ye faithful among the congregation, who are ministered unto: let this interesting service between *Paul* and his beloved people, which GOD the HOLY GHOST hath so graciously recorded the account of for his Church's edification, be your pattern, and the object of your imitation. Such indeed, should be every assembly of the faithful. lie that preached', should preach, as though it was his last. And they who hear, as though they should hear no more. Every separation, and the breaking up of assemblies, as it the final farewell. LORD JESUS! do thou be present at all, that in the close on earth, instantly thy redeemed may meet thee in heaven.

CHAPTER 21

CONTENTS

Paul is advised by the Brethren not to go up to Jerusalem. He persists. On his Arrival there, he visits James. Soon after he is seized by the Jews. He is rescued by the Chief Captain.

ACTS 21:1-3

And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara: (2) And finding a ship sailing over unto Phoenicia, we went aboard, and set forth. (3) Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.

The separation between the Apostle and the Church at *Ephesus*, must have been very painful. The word made use of to express it, is strong; signifying being *torn* from each others' embraces. And what added to the sorrow, was the consciousness on both sides, that it was final. There is an affinity between faithful pastors and their people, which far exceeds the common relationships in natural life. And when death, or a separation like this, which was as death, being final, takes place, there is great cause for sorrow. The children of Israel wept thirty days at the death of Moses, Deuteronomy 34: 8. But, Reader! what a relief to the soul is it, amidst all the separations of life, and the deaths, or departures of every one around; JESUS departs not, but is with his people for ever! Oh! thou dear LORD! let the thought *of* this comfort and support my soul, amidst all the dead. and

dying circumstances, of a world passing away. JESUS lives, and loves, and is with his people for ever, Matthew 28:20.

ACTS 21:4-6

And finding disciples we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem. (5) And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed. (6) And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.

It is very blessed to observe, how the mind of the Apostle was borne up amidst these exercises, in the forebodings of his friends, concerning this journey to *Jerusalem*. The HOLY GHOST had witnessed to *Paul*, that in every city, *bonds and afflictions would meet him*, Acts 20:23. But, the vision at *Corinth*, Acts 18:9, had made *Paul* more confident. And, as *Paul* told the Church in the preceding Chapter, his journey to *Jerusalem* was by the SPIRIT'S direction, Acts 20:22, The intimation, therefore, of those disciples, *Paul* considered]

ACTS 21:7-9

And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day. (8) And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. (9) And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

This *Casaria* in *Palestine*, was rendered memorable by the Lord's grace to the Gentiles, in the call of *Cornelius*. See Acts 10 and Commentary. And, it should seem, that *Philip*, one of the first deacons, Acts 6:5. whose ministry is blessedly recorded (Acts 8) now resided here. The prophesying of his daughters was in perfect agreement to Scripture promise, Joel 2:28.

ACTS 21:10-14

And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. (11) And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. (12) And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. (13) Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. (14) And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

What a beautiful portrait might be drawn of the Apostle, in the situation here described! Yea, rather, what, an unequalled

representation by that which no picture can set forth, hath GOD the HOLY GHOST given the Church, in the Apostle's words. I am *ready*, (said he,) *not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the LORD JESUS*. Blessed saint of GOD! *Paul* had met with continual exercises to deter him from this journey. It was painful the separation from the Church, at *Ephesus*. He was soon after told by some, and who spake by the SPIRIT, that his journey would be productive of great opposition. This prophet, which came from *Judaea*, manifested by outward signs, in binding his own hands and feet with *Paul's* girdle, that so the HOLY GHOST declared, the owner of the girdle should be bound, at *Jerusalem*. And now, the whole body of friends importuned him with earnestness of entreaty, that he would relinquish the journey. *What mean ye* (said he) *to weep and to break mine heart? I am ready!* Oh! how prepared are those whom the LORD prepares. Flesh and blood must everlastingly be unprepared. But, when the LORD animates the soul, all other feelings give way. However dear life is, yet CHRIST and his cause is dearer! Reader! let you and I beg of *Paul's* LORD, to make us more like *Paul*, in SPIRIT!

ACTS 21:15-26

And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem. (16) There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge. (17) And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. (18) And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. (19) And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. (20) And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord,

and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: (21) And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. (22) What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come. (23) Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; (24) Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. (25) As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication. (26) Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

In addition to what I have already observed, on the subject of *Paul's* giving in to *Jewish* customs, upon this, and the like occasions, (See Acts 18:23 and the Commentary on that place,) I would only detain the Reader to remark here, how much this temporizing SPIRIT produced the very reverse of what it was intended. From what motive it was that the Apostle was prevailed upon to comply with their advice, is not said: but, from *Paul's* general conduct on this subject, there can be no doubt, that it was foreign to his own sentiments. Let the Reader consult but his Epistle to the *Galatians*, and especially Galatians 2:11 to the end, and Galatians 5:1-6, and he must conclude, that the Apostle's heart was not in this business. And, is it not probable, that the proposal made by

those friends at *Jerusalem*, arose from their having heard, that *Paul* had done the same thing at *Cenchre*? So that a departure in one instance, only makes way for another. And even our friends, as we here discover, take advantage therefrom of our weakness. Precious JESUS! where shall we look for perfection, but to thee? thou *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens!* Hebrews 7:26.

ACTS 21:27-40

And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, (28) Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. (29) (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) (30) And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut. (31) And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. (32) Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul. (33) Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done. (34) And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle. (35) And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people. (36) For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him. (37) And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou

speak Greek? (38) Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers? (39) But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people. (40) And when he had given him license, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

I do not think it necessary to detain the Reader, with any particular observations, on this history. The sacred Writer hath given it to the Church, in a very interesting Manner, as is here recorded, and it can need no comment to explain. But, taking it altogether, in one collected point of view, I would beg the Reader to remark with me, how very graciously the Lord was watching over his faithful servant the whole time, to screen him from the death one class of enemies intended for him, and from the scourging about to be laid upon him by another. The sight of the Roman captain terrified the Jews, who were about to kill Paul. And, after this, (as the next Chapter relates, Acts 22:26) the Centurion was frightened, who at the command of the Roman Captain had bound *Paul* in readiness for scourging, when he found Paul was a Roman. And these things were connected with a third preventing providence, namely, Paul being permitted to speak to the people; and thereby not only gaining time to rescue the Apostle from their violence at that moment, but affording an opportunity of relating his wonderful conversion, under the Roman authority, thus protecting his person, before his countrymen the Jews. All these are very striking

circumstances in proof, how the Lord Jesus watched over his servant, in so critical a season: and though permitting the Apostle, for wise purposes, to be so sharply exercised! yet still overruling the whole, as should ultimately promote the LORD's glory, and Paul's welfare.

Reader! it is blessed to observe, how astonishingly at times, the LORD manifests the sovereignty of his power, in the deliverance of his people. When the enemy seems to triumph with an high hand, and all hope for the moment seems to be gone; how suddenly, and unexpectedly, the LORD then appears for them, and displays his strength, in creature weakness. We have numberless examples of the kind in Holy Writ. Jacob's distress concerning his brother: Genesis 32. The Church: Exodus 3. The three children in Babylon: Daniel 3. But perhaps none more striking, and suited to this of the Apostle, than what is recorded of Israel, in the times of the Kings. It is said, that the LORD saw the affliction of Israel that it was very bitter, for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel. And the LORD said, that he would not blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: So he gave them a gracious, and unlooked for deliverance, by the hand of an unworthy instrument, even Jeroboam, the son of Joash, 2 Kings 14:26-27. And thus was it with Paul. The Jews on one hand, and the Roman power on the other; all foes to Paul. But, when the LORD works for his people, he works beyond all creature strength, against all creature probabilities, and against all expectation of human foresight, or contrivance. And, whether the Apostle alluded to this

instance, or to any other, I will not determine; but certain it is, he had in view circumstances so particularly trying, that in his apprehension, all expected deliverance was over from human attempts, when he said: We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves; but in GOD, which raiseth the dead, 2 Corinthians 1:9. And, blessings of every kind are doubly sweet, when the LORD'S hand in the appointment is discernible, and the LORD'S power is manifested in creature weakness, Genesis 22:14; Zechariah 14: 7.

REFLECTIONS

READER! what a sweet prospect is here shewn, to the ministers and congregations of the faithful, in the representations of *Paul* and his companions, going about in their visitation of the different Churches? The imagination cannot conceive any thing equally lovely! And, though private Christians do not, because the LORD hath not called them to it, in their sweet societies and meetings, exercise any ministerial function with each other; yet are they both taught, and exhorted, by such examples, to have all their assemblings together, opened, and closed in prayer. And, when the LORD, who is in the midst of them, according to his own most sure promise, pours out upon them a SPIRIT of prayer, so that they commend each other to the LORD, the very place where they are assembled is sanctified, whether on the shore, or in the house: blessings are implored for those going away, and for those that remain behind; and the sweet union of CHRIST'S

love forms them one in Him, that whether absent froth each other, or present, they are accepted in JESUS!

How unpromising soever the removal of our friends may appear, though like Paul, bonds, or imprisonment await the believer; this reflection is always full of comfort: the LORD'S people must be the LORD'S care. That Scripture should never be forgotten: Yea, he loveth the people; all his saints are in thy hands. Oh! then, how sweetly one of the Apostles reasoneth upon it: Casting, saith he, all your care upon him, for he careth for you. Let Paul be at Ephesus, or Jerusalem; let the LORD'S people be at home, or abroad; the consciousness of JESUS being with them, secures all. How wonderfully were all the circumstances of evil, made to minister to greater good, in his instance. The Jews would have killed him. The Roman power would have scourged him. But, the LORD puts a hook in the nose, and a bridle in the lips of both; and GOD shall be glorified by his servant's preaching a sermon to them, and which they shall hear. Reader! observe these things, and then remember that sweet promise: All things work together for good, to them that love GOD, to them who, are called, according to his purpose.

CHAPTER 22

CONTENTS

Paul addresses the Assembly, and relates the Particulars of his Conversion. He is interrupted by the Clamour of the Jews. He

is again rescued by the Chief Captain, and conveyed into the Castle.

ACTS 22:1-2

Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defense which I make now unto you. (2) (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)

I detain the Reader at the opening of Paul's address, to remark, with what composure the Apostle delivered his discourse, with what dignity of manners! and yet more worthy our notice, that he should speak unto them in the sacred language, in which, from the first, the LORD hath spoken unto his people. How exceedingly to be desired, would it be, had our minds a suitable reverence for the original tongue, to approach as near that standard of purity the Hebrew as possible, in all our solemn seasons. And especially when we call to mind, how graciously the LORD watched over his Church of old, to keep his people from the Ashdod language of the heathen. Behold! how the very tongue of Abraham the Hebrew, and his children, commanded the reverence and attention of Paul's enemies, while he spake to them in it, Nehemiah 13:23-25.

ACTS 22:3-21

I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. (4) And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. (5) As also the high priest doth bear me

witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished. (6) And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. (7) And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? (8) And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. (9) And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. (10) And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. (11) And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. (12) And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, (13) Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. (14) And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. (15) For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. (16) And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. (17) And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; (18) And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. (19) And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: (20) And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. (21) And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

I would beg to call the Reader's attention to the grace of God the HOLY GHOST, in his love to the Church, in causing the

account of *Paul's* conversion to be thrice recorded, for their improvement. And I would beg the Reader to pause, and ask himself, whether there must not have been some very pressing reason for it, wherefore the LORD should so have done. Had it been intended only as the history of a matter of fact, once would, in this case, have answered every purpose. But, when we behold it brought forward again, and again, as it is here, and Acts 26; I venture to conclude, that the LORD the SPIRIT had a special design in the thing itself. The Apostle indeed, to the Church of *the Galatians*, and to his beloved *Timothy*, hath assigned a very blessed cause, Galatians 1:11-16; 1 Timothy 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:12-16. Reader! let us bless GOD the HOLY GHOST for his grace in this particular. And, let us seek grace from the LORD, that the sweet record, so often brought before the Church, may have all the intended effect of it, upon our hearts.

I do not think it necessary to detain the Reader with any further observations on the subject of *Paul's* conversion, in this place; having somewhat largely dwelt upon it at the ninth Chapter, where it is first recorded: to which I refer. But, I would take occasion, from what the Apostle hath here added, which was not in that history, being remote from the time that this must have been, to observe, Paul had a *second* vision of the LORD, and which was not in the road to *Demascus*, but at *Jerusalem*. And, I would ask, (but not determine,) was not this the appearing of the LORD JESUS to Paul, which he speaks of? 1 Corinthians 9:1 and 1 Corinthians 15:8. And, I would also say, (though not speaking decidedly,) might not this be the time, which Paul speaks of elsewhere,

when the LORD taught him about the Ordinance of the Holy Supper, and which, from CHRIST'S Person, and authority, he received, and delivered to the Church of Corinth, 1 Corinthians 11:23.

ACTS 22:22-30

And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. (23) And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air, (24) The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him. (25) And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? (26) When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman. (27) Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. (28) And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born. (29) Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him. (30) On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

It is worthy remarking, that the Jews did not attempt to interrupt *Paul*, as long as he continued to relate the circumstances of his conversion: but, when he came to speak of the LORD'S commissioning him to the *Gentiles*; their anger could not be any longer restrained. And, Reader! you may

remark it, as one universal principle, which pervades the whole human race, by the fall. GOD'S sovereignty in the call of his Church, as distinguished from the Adam-nature fall, is the subject of hatred in every man's breast, before that the LORD hath made him acquainted with the plague of his own heart, and the grace of GOD, in bringing him out of it. The LORD Jesus taught his disciples to expect this. He showed them, that in preaching these truths, they must look for the malice of the world; and not marvel at their hatred, John 15:18-21. And, agreeably to this standard of our LORD'S, it is this doctrine, which calls forth the particular displeasure of the ungodly. Let the Reader remark it, as he passeth on in life, for it is worth his closest observation. Preachers of the word, yea, what in the present hour, are called Gospel preachers, if they throw into the back ground, the LORD'S distinguishing love to his people; and never speak of the LORD'S sovereignty, in the eternal choice of his Church, before all worlds; they may, and will, pass by, for the most part, without calling forth, as *Paul* here did, the outcry, and interruption of the world. But GOD'S sovereignty, and CHRIST'S special love, with the HOLY GHOST'S distinguishing grace; if these are insisted on before the people, depend upon it, these will rouse the resentment, and call forth the indignation, of all, who know nothing of these precious truths in their own souls. Yea, not only the ungodly world, but yet more pointedly *professors* of the Gospel, whose knowledge consists in head-apprehension, not heart-influence; these will be more bitter than even the openly profane. And nothing upon earth, can more decidedly shew,

the blindness, ignorance, and prejudice of the human mind, untaught of GOD!

I cannot suffer the Reader to proceed, without calling upon *him* again in this place, as in the former Chapter, to remark, how the LORD, by his overruling providence, checked the Centurion's thongs, as he had done before the violence of the Jews, by the sight of the Roman Captain, from pulling his servant in pieces. It is very blessed to behold, what slender means the LORD at times makes use of to stop the enemy's hand. The want of sleep in king *Ahasuerus*, laid the foundation for the deliverance of the whole Jewish nation from destruction, Esther 6:1, &c. The dream of another Eastern monarch gave birth to the introduction of *Daniel*, and his companions, to the highest places, in the empire, Daniel 2 throughout. And here, the presence of this Roman Captain before the Jews, saved *Paul* from immediate death; and afterwards, the mere privilege of a *Roman* Citizen, from all the unfeeling cruelties of the *Roman* punishment. Reader! what a blessed thing it is, to eye CHRIST, as the Prophet saw him, behind the vast machine, of *wheel within wheel*, in the government of the Universe? Ezekiel 1:27-28. What a yet sweeter view in this contemplation is it, to behold the Church, and all its concerns, with every individual of it in the LORD'S hands? Ephesians 1:22. And, what a still higher source of comfort, holy joy, and confidence, than all, is it, when by faith, full, firm, ardent, unceasing faith, we can live upon CHRIST, in the assurance, that in this government, and this concern of the LORD JESUS, he is unceasingly engaged for his

people, and extending to the least, as well as the greatest, all that we are interested in, for life, and death; and time, and eternity!

It should seem, that *Paul's* freedom, arising from birth, could not have been as was usual with the children of the *Romans*, in the city of Rome, for *Paul* was born, as he had just before said, at *Tarsus*, and was a Jew. But *Tarsus* was made a free city by *Mark Anthony*, so reported by *Pliny*; and hence his birthright. Be this however as it might be, it was a very happy circumstance in this critical moment, and the Apostle, though prepared for bonds or death, had an undoubted right to avail himself of his citizenship, that he might escape unjust oppression.

REFLECTIONS

My soul! behold the great Apostle, rescued from Jew, and Gentile, and with a mind awakened, animated, and strengthened by the LORD, boldly addressing both, and declaring the glory of GOD, in the wonderful work of his conversion! And do not fail to remark, with what candour, and openness, he confesseth his former state of unregeneracy; when persecuting unto the death, the precious followers of the Loco JESUS! He seems to be at once regardless, what shame, and confusion of face he takes to himself; so that he may but thereby give the greater glory to his LORD. Is it so with thee, my soul? While CHRIST'S name is so precious: art thou laying lower in the dust before GOD, in token of thine

unworthiness? Is *Paul's* language thine, when he saith: *And the grace of our LORD was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in CHRIST JESUS!* Oh then, tell it abroad as he did, and in every direction, proclaim the blessed truth: *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that CHRIST JESUS came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief!*

Reader do not fail to remark, the stedfastness of *Paul*, amidst all the rage and malice of his enemies, He was indeed free born, when by his new birth in regeneration, the LORD had made him free. This was a freedom, unpurchasable with money. And, as it made *Paul* a true citizen of no mean city; so it secured him all the everlasting and eternal privileges of a kingdom, which cannot be moved, whose Builder, and Maker, is GOD.

CHAPTER 23

CONTENTS

Paul pleadeth his Cause before the Council. A Dissension takes place in consequence of it among his Accusers. He is sent to Felix.

ACTS 23:1-5

And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God unto this day. (2) And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. (3) Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me

after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? (4) And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? (5) Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

While we cannot but admire the faithfulness, and intrepidity, of the great Apostle, in thus challenging his enemies, and contending for his integrity; we must not strain *Paul's* words too far, as though he meant to say, that he had always lived without guilt upon his conscience before GOD. This was far from the Apostle's meaning. All he intended to assert, indeed all he did assert, was, that his conscience could not reproach him with having done any thing to expose him to their laws, or their just displeasure. It is a point well worth attending to, in our estimate of men and things, to observe, that in the Scripture account of holy men, and of their integrity, nothing more is implied, than that in life, they conduct themselves in all the departments of it, uprightly, and with a good conscience towards men. They draw a line of distinction, between the judgment of men, and the tribunal of GOD. Thus *David* calls upon the LORD to plead his cause, with unrighteous judges. *Judge me, (said he,) O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me, Psalm 7:8.* But, when *David* contemplated GOD's tribunal, and not man's, he cried out: *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O LORD, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified, Psalm 163:2.* And thus, in like manner, other holy men of old, considered the vast difference: See Job 27:5-7 with Job 9:20-21. So that *Paul's* justifying himself in this

place, is wholly with an eye to human laws, in the transactions of one man with another.

The passionate behavior of *Ananias*, and the hasty retort of *Paul*, both proved the common Adam-nature to which they both belonged. Though grace had renewed the mind of *Paul*, yet the unrenewed body had all the old man of sin remaining! So Paul said, and so all the children of GOD know, by experience, Romans 7:23, to the end. But, though *Paul* spake hastily, yet there was truth in what he said: and it should seem to have been somewhat prophetic. Sinners are smitten of the LORD, when judgment overtakes them. And the unjust judge can expect no other. Reader! do not overlook the humble acknowledgment of the Apostle, of his error, by haste and inadvertency. True grace, will always induce such effects.

ACTS 23:6-10

But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. (7) And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. (8) For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both. (9) And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God. (10) And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.

I need not dwell upon the evident design of *Paul*, by this declaration of his. Neither will it be necessary for me to go into the subject, of those very different sects, of which the present Council consisted. But, I would rather take occasion from hence to remark, what an awful day must it have been, in the Jewish Church, when the Seventy, or *Sanhedrim*, forming the High Court for judgment in all things sacred, was made up of such a motley body of men. Reader! do, I beseech you, look at the Scripture account of the LORD'S institution of this Council, as stated in the book of *Numbers*. Attend to what the LORD himself said, concerning this Council of Seventy of the Elders, chosen for this express purpose. Remark JEHOVAH'S promise, of putting his SPIRIT upon them; and then, look at this degenerate Council, with such a character as *Ananias* at the head of them! Oh! what an awful change! See Numbers 11:16-17. See also Acts 4:7 and Commentary.

ACTS 23:11

And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

Pause over this verse for the sweetness of it. How very gracious was it in the LORD Jesus, thus to favor his servant with another vision, as he had done before! (see Acts 18:9 and Commentary.) And how blessed in the LORD, by way of shewing him that all the contrivances of his enemies for his destruction at *Jerusalem*, should not affect his life; that the LORD had business for him yet to perform at *Rome*. And this

was peculiarly consolatory to the Apostle, because though *Agabus* by the SPIRIT had prophesied of his being *bound* at Jerusalem, yet now from the LORD himself he was taught, that at this time he was not to *die* there. Precious LORD JESUS! who shall count, yea, what imagination of men, or angels, can fully conceive the boundless love of thine heart? And, oh! how sweet to my soul is the recollection, (in the very moment of writing this *Poor Man's Commentary*,) that to *Paul*, upon this occasion here recorded, and upon every other to thy Church and people, all that love of thine, and the communication of it, flows from thy double nature, thy GOD-Man love, to endear it ten thousand fold to our souls!

ACTS 23:12-22

And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. (13) And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. (14) And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. (15) Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you tomorrow, as though ye would inquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him. (16) And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul. (17) Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him. (18) So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee. (19) Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me? (20) And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou

wouldest bring down Paul tomorrow into the council, as though they would inquire somewhat of him more perfectly. (21) But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee. (22) So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast showed these things to me.

Reader! pause over the sad relation here recorded of those awful men! What a proof is here of the desperately wicked heart of man. See with what earnestness they entered into an oath, or as the Jews called it, *cherem*, or *anathema*, for shedding blood, which, if broken, called for GOD'S curse upon them that made it! Beheld no less the awful state of the chief priests and elders, who, as men, and especially as members of the *Sanhedrim*, the moment the proposal was made to them of bringing down *Paul* to the council for this purpose, should have brought them forth before the council to be punished for the intentional murder. But, Reader! mark with yet more earnest attention the overlooking and disposing grace of the LORD, to save his servant, and frustrate the devices of the wicked. See what a poor instrument in *Paul's* sister's son the LORD makes use of for this purpose. No doubt the LORD who sent his angel, and opened the prison doors upon several occasions before, (Acts 5:18- 20; Acts 12:7 and Acts 16:26) might have done it now. But the work and mercy were not less the LORD'S, because brought about by human means. And, oh! how frequently is the same grace manifesting itself now in life, in the daily ten thousand instances of it, were our inattentive minds awakened to watch

and see how the LORD is watching over us, 2 Chronicles 16:9. Who would have thought that this youth (for so he is called, verse 17.) should have been chosen by the LORD for to be the highly honored instrument to save the life of this great Apostle! And how is his memory honored in the Church through all generations from that hour for the service, without which we should never have known that *Paul* had a sister, or that sister a son. Let all our youths, (if any such read this *Poor Man's Commentary*,) learn from hence, how sure it is that the eye of the LORD is always upon them. And let the thought keep their minds under a constant regard to his Almighty inspection. And let them be looking

ACTS 23:23-35

And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; (24) And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor. (25) And he wrote a letter after this manner: (26) Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting. (27) This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. (28) And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council: (29) Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. (30) And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what they had against him. Farewell. (31) Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris. (32) On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle: (33) Who, when they came to

Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him. (34) And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia; (35) I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.

I should not have thought it necessary to have detained the Reader at this place, but to remark to him how the LORD must have wrought, upon this chief captain's mind, through fear for his own safety to provide for *Paul's*. It appears from his letter to *Felix*, as here inserted, that he wanted to shew the governor what an high regard he had for the *Roman* name, but he artfully concealed that he had bound *Paul*, while he tells him that he understood he was a *Roman*. And I pray the Reader yet further to observe, with what contempt he speaks of the accusations brought against *Paul*, which he called *questions of their law*. The resurrection of the dead, and a world to come, which Paul was called in question for, (see Acts 23:6) was, in this poor heathen's view, things of no moment! Reader! think of your mercies in CHRIST! Since the SON of GOD brought life and immortality to light through his Gospel, oh! how precious the thought, that these things are no longer questionable, 2 Timothy 1:10. Oh! what unspeakable mercies hath JESUS brought his Church! And, oh! what distinguishing grace, when a soul is made the happy partaker of CHRIST, and all his mercies with him? Hebrews 3:14. Reader! what saith your heart to both?

REFLECTIONS

I would summon my own heart, while I call upon the Reader's also, in the review of *Paul's* appeal before the council, to solemnly enquire whether we have *lived in all good conscience before GOD unto this day?* It is an important question, and not hastily and presumptuously to be answered. We are such partial judges of evil thoughts, when that judgment respects ourselves, that self-love too often gives a bias to the *opinion*. But, when we come to be weighed in the balance of unerring truth, not according to our view of things, but according to GOD'S righteous judgment, the question then becomes solemn indeed, how is the LORD sanctified in the soul? Reader! doth it not strike you, (I bless the LORD it doth me,) that it is well for poor fallen sinful creatures, we have a better righteousness than our own to trust in, and to plead before GOD, under all the misgivings of conscience, and under all the accusations of sin and Satan!

Let not the Reader overlook (I pray the LORD I may not) the LORD'S watchful care over his servant, amidst the host of foes with which he was surrounded. Beautiful is that scripture, and here it was fully proved, *The LORD knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation.* *Paul* had no knowledge, but the LORD had, how he should escape, when both *Jew* and *Gentile* seized upon his person. It would be very blessed for me, if I always had this in remembrance. There are numberless anxieties I crowd into life for want of recollecting, that these things are my LORD'S concern, and not mine. JESUS hath said by his servant, casting *all* your care upon him, for he careth for you. I know this in theory as well as words can make it.

And frequently under this authority I *do* cast *all* my care upon the LORD, and bring the whole to his throne of grace. But soon after, yea, sometimes in a few moments after, I discover that I must have fetched them all away again, and taken them up, for they are all upon me. Oh! thou dear LORD! is it thus I learn my unworthiness and faithlessness to know more thy grace and all-sufficiency?

CHAPTER 24

CONTENTS

Paul accused by Tertullus, answereth in his Defence. Felix defers Judgment. Paul preacheth before Felix and his Wife. The Governor is superseded in Office, and leaves Paul in Bonds.

ACTS 24:1-9

And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul. (2) And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, (3) We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. (4) Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words. (5) For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: (6) Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law. (7) But the chief captain Lysias

came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, (8) Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him. (9) And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.

In all this flaming speech there is not a single charge except that of being a follower of CHRIST, whom by way of contempt they called the *Nazarene*. A *pestilent fellow*, and a *mover of sedition*, were general words of abuse, and without proof. And although this orator prefaced his accusation of *Paul* with a fulsome compliment to *Felix*, yet the whole offence of the Apostle was for preaching CHRIST. And the chief priest, *Ananias*, and the Jews, could find nothing beside to criminate the Apostle!

But they were all unconscious, while charging *Paul* as a ringleader of the sect of the *Nazarenes*, what indirect honor they were thereby conferring on the Apostle. If the Reader will consult my *Poor Man's Concordance*, under the article *Nazarene*, he will there see the subject treated somewhat largely. I shall only here therefore observe, that as the LORD JESUS was specially and peculiarly called the *Nazarene*, being in fact in his human nature the only *Nazarite to God*; it was the highest of all possible honors to call *Paul* a ringleader of the holy order. The word is derived from *Netzar*, signifying *separated*. And in reference to CHRIST, it means the peculiar separation of that holy portion of our nature, underived from the fallen stock, but formed by the overshadowing power of the HOLY GHOST, and sanctified to the vast purpose of union

with the GODHEAD. So personally and peculiarly is CHRIST, as CHRIST, the true *Nazarite*, yea, the only *Nazarite*, to whom all others were but types and shadows, Lamentations 4:7.

And it is worthy our closest observation, in proof of this, as if JEHOVAH would have CHRIST specially known by this name, that the LORD JESUS is by way of eminency so distinguished both in heaven and earth, by *angels*, *devils*, yea, by the LORD himself, who sweetly called himself by the name from heaven, when speaking to the Apostle *Paul*, The Apostles: John 1:45, Angels: Mark 16:6, *Roman* soldiers: John 18:5, The servant maid in *Pilate's* hall: Matthew 26:71, *Pilate* himself: John 19:19, CHRIST'S servants in working miracles: Acts 3:6 and Acts 4:10, *Devils*: Mark 1:24, And our dear LORD himself: Acts 22:8. Reader! these are sweet testimonies to this one great point, when that point is considered in terms equal to its importance, that JESUS CHRIST is the one and only *Nazarite* to GOD.

ACTS 24:10-21

Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself: (11) Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. (12) And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: (13) Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. (14) But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: (15) And have hope toward God, which

they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. (16) And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men. (17) Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings. (18) Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult. (19) Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had aught against me. (20) Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council, (21) Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.

Let the Reader behold the composedness which marked *Paul's* conduct before this unjust assembly. Until *Felix* waved his hand to him to speak, the Apostle stood silent. Indeed there was nothing to answer. For if the Reader will count the time as *Paul* stated, from the day he left *Caesarea*, to the then present hour, it was only twelve days, nine of which they had confined him. What pestilence or sedition could he have been guilty of in such an interval, three-fourths of which he had been a prisoner. And the three first days he was engaged in performing the religious worship in the temple, for which he came up to *Jerusalem*. But I hope the Reader will not overlook the chief and leading point which *Tertullus* labored at, which was to insinuate, that this sect, as he called the followers of the LORD JESUS, were enemies to government. This was the master-piece of Satan, in the accusation brought against our LORD, Luke 23:2; John 19:12. And this, more or less, in every age of the Church, hath been the grand means made use of to undermine the cause of CHRIST, Psalm 2:1-2; Exodus 1:10, Nehemiah 5:17. How little do these men know

that the real stability of earthly kingdoms is founded in the interests of CHRIST'S. Indeed the very purposes for which all monarchies of the world are carried on, are in a way of ministry to promote the ultimate end of the kingdom of the LORD JESUS. *The earth helped the Woman*, Revelation 12:16-17, Proverbs 8:15-16.

ACTS 24:22-27

And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the utmost of your matter. (23) And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him. (24) And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. (25) And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. (26) He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the more often, and communed with him. (27) But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

There is somewhat truly awful in the character of *Felix*, as here given. He had been governor under the Roman emperor in this province many years. Some writers state *thirteen*. And from what is here said of him, that he had a *more perfect knowledge of that way*, that is, the Christian way, than *Lysias*, the chief captain, who sent *Paul* to him for judgment, or *Tertullus*, and the other accusers, it should seem that he had informed himself of some of the leading points of the Gospel.

This was the more probable, because the event of the conversion of *Cornelius*, (Acts 10) which took place at *Caesarea*, he must have heard of; and the Church of CHRIST formed there in consequence thereof, was now under his own government. See Acts 18:22. *Philip* the Evangelist, also lived under his government, Acts 21:8. So that it was hardly possible *Felix* could have been ignorant, either of the doctrines of the Gospel, or of the exemplary lives of the followers of the LORD JESUS, Philippians 4:8-9.

It appears from history, that this *Drusilla*, whom *Felix* had taken to wife, was married at the time he took her to another man, so that he was living in open adultery. Strange that such characters as *Felix* and *Drusilla*, should desire to hear any thing of the LORD JESUS CHRIST! And no doubt the motive was more for curiosity or ridicule than seriousness. But whatever they proposed to themselves from *Paul's* discourse, the effect on *Felix's* conscience turned out the very reverse, as his trembling manifested. Reader! it is very blessed *at* times to behold, as in the instance here shewn, how the guilty minds of sinners are alarmed in the dreadful prospect of that judgment to come! It becomes an additional testimony to the faith. The LORD even now doth not leave himself without witness in the hearts of sinners!

But, Reader, do not fail to observe also, how totally different from grace in the soul is this trembling of a guilty conscience, as in the instance of *Felix*, unawakened by the HOLY GHOST. Had the work been of the LORD, like the Jailor at *Philippi*,

when *Felix* trembled at the apprehension of a judgment to come, like him, though a governor, he would have sprung from his seat, and fell down before his prisoner, and unawed by all around, he would have cried out in words, to the same effect as his, *what must I do to be saved?* Acts 16:23-34. We hear nothing at the kind from *Felix*. He trembled for the hour, and the conscience hardened again! like the thaw made by the sun on the frost which freezes again at night.

And it forms an exact correspondence, to such a character, in what followed in *Felix's* life. *Paul* had said in his defense, that he had come up to Jerusalem to bring *alms* and offerings, (Acts 24:17.) *Felix* concluded, that from the little time *Paul* had been at *Jerusalem*, this money could not be all gone. Under this impression he gave liberty for *Paul's* friends to visit him. And he sent for *Paul* the oftener to commune with him, but not it should seem about righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come, but with an hope that the poor prisoner would have help from his friends, and would offer him money that he might loose him. But though this attempt of *Felix* was carried on for two whole years, during which space he found *Paul* too poor to get any thing from, and too honest to purchase a liberty unjustly kept from him by money; at his departure from his government, so regardless was he of all that was right, and so unfeeling to the sufferings of his prisoner, that to gratify the Jews, he left *Paul* bound. Thus he closed his last act of government with injustice and cruelty. And how he closed his last act of life, to go before that judgment *Paul* had made him tremble only in describing, is

better conceived than expressed. If the Reader would see what the word of GOD hath said of all such men, he will find some strong representations of their awful departure in Job 21:7-15; Psalm 49: 6-14; Isaiah 14:4-18.

REFLECTIONS

READER! dismiss not this chapter without taking one short view more of this mock court of pretended justice, before whom the Apostle *Paul* was brought to answer for his life. Behold, on the one side, *Tertullus* hired for this purpose, that by his eloquence he might lead the minds of his hearers from what was right; and *Ananias* the high priest, to give weight by his presence to the accusations against *Paul*, and the whole body of the Jews with open mouth forming a clamorous cry to criminate the Apostle! On the other hand, behold the poor defenseless prisoner, while hearing their violent abuse, standing silent, and not presuming to open his mouth, until commanded by the governor. And, behold this time-serving prince presiding at such a court, whose object was to get money, and not administer justice! And where are the different parties now? What is become of the oratory of *Tertullus*? What are his present views of the sect of the *Nazarenes*, or of *Paul*, the ringleader? And what hath *Felix*, and all the characters of his complexion found of judgment, when from the trembling at the representation only, they have now entered into the full manifestation of it in reality, in the eternal world?

Blessed LORD JESUS! how sweet to the souls of all thy redeemed ones, is the recollection that thou art judge of the quick and dead! And amidst all the unjust decisions, and painful perversions, thy people are not unfrequently brought under, in the present time-state of the Church, the thought of thy righteous judgment brings relief to every case. He that is the believer's judge, is in the same moment his advocate and brother. He will vindicate the cause of his people, and finally and fully restore perfect order among all the works of God.

CHAPTER 25

CONTENTS

Paul is accused to Festus, the Governor. After some Time he is brought forth to trial. He appeals to Caesar. Festus and Agrippa confer on the Subject.

ACTS 25:1-5

Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem. (2) Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, (3) And desired favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him. (4) But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither. (5) Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.

I beg the Reader at the opening of this Chapter to remark, that notwithstanding the awful state those perjured persons

had fallen into, by having sworn not to eat or drink till they had killed *Paul*, (see Acts 23:12 &c.) yet still the high priest, and the leading body of the Jews thirsted for his blood. No time could wear away this enmity. No alteration can ever take place in this deep-rooted hatred against CHRIST and his people. Reader! depend upon it, the same exists in the present hour. A zeal like that of *Paul's*, for the glory of CHRIST, unalloyed with a mixture of pharisaical righteousness, the preachers of such a doctrine must ever be the objects of general hatred and displeasure. No foes of CHRIST equaled the self-righteous Pharisee, while the SON of GOD was upon earth! And no enemy now is greater against the pure truths of the Gospel, than characters of the same description.

ACTS 25:6-12

And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought. (7) And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove. (8) While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all. (9) But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? (10) Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. (11) For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar. (12) Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.

What an awful view we have here again of a corrupt judge. *Festus*, as well as *Felix*, plainly saw, that there was nothing in which those unprincipled men could criminate *Paul*. He knew also, that he had been unjustly detained in prison for more than two years by *Felix*. And in the face of these palpable cruelties, to propose another hearing at a distant day, and to be carried to Jerusalem for that purpose, was the grossest act of oppression and cruelty imaginable. Oh! *Festus!* how hast thou long since gone up to the Jerusalem, the Zion of GOD, which is above, and there been judged before *Paul's* LORD, for thy cruelties to his dear servant? Thy conscience then was hardened past all feeling and thy pleasing the Jews at the expense of GOD'S truth, amused thy unfeeling soul. But thy sins were only accumulating, like the gathering of gun-powder in the barrel, *treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of GOD*. And how long since, hath that fire seized upon thy full-bosomed soul of guilt, and sunk thee into that place of endless torment, which, kindled in GOD'S anger, burneth for ever to the lowest hell, Deuteronomy 32:22.

This appeal of *Paul*, no doubt, was made from the encouragement he had derived from the LORD'S vision to him; in which JESUS had told him, that *he must bear witness for him at Rome*, Acts 23:11. And very sweet, and seasonable, was that gracious visit of the LORD, to his poor prisoner. In the confidence of which, he demands a hearing before the then Emperor of *Rome*, who was *Festus's* lord. And, by this means, he not only pleaded his right, as a *Roman*, so to be

tried; but he perfectly for the time, got free from his enemies at *Jerusalem*. Reader!! do not overlook the love of JESUS, on this occasion, to *Paul*. And, when you have thanked the LORD JESUS, for this grace to the Apostle *then*; connect with it the assurance, that the same grace JESUS sheweth to all his people *now*. Oh! how sweet are all the love-visits of JESUS!

Reader! even at this distance of time, I feel my poor heart disposed to bless GOD, for his timely instruction given to *Paul*, to make this appeal. Methinks I see the Governor, looking most pitiful indeed! He is obliged to take counsel with those around him, how to act. And he that just before had said: wilt thou go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me? is now compelled to conduct himself towards his poor prisoner, as if *Paul* had said in answer: be judged before thee? No! To your sovereign and master, I appeal for judgment. By *Caesar* only will I be judged! And here the Court broke up. The Jews sent home disappointed. The Governor humbled, *Paul* triumphant. And how often doth the LORD thus baffle the designs of bad men, and deliver his people?

ACTS 25:13-22

And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus. (14) And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: (15) About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him. (16) To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him. (17) Therefore, when they

were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth. (18) Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: (19) But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. (20) And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. (21) But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar. (22) Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. Tomorrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

I pass by all that is said here, of the pomp and grandeur of the persons in the intimacy of *Festus*, things but of a moment, to attend to what is more important; the concerns of the Church at this time. One circumstance is very striking, as related in this paragraph. *Festus* here talks of the manner of the *Romans*, in their delivery of criminals, to death. And, as *Paul* was brought before *Festus* by the Jews, in hopes that he would have condemned him to death, though a Jew; nothing can be more plain, than that the Jews had now totally lost the power in themselves to judge, and condemn any; for it was solely exercised by the *Roman* power. But, if the Reader will compare what is here said, with what took place at the death of *Stephen*; (see Acts 7:57-58, and Commentary there) he will discover, that a great change had taken place since that time. The *Sanhedrim*, in *Stephen's* case, did actually try, condemn, and execute, this martyr to the GODHEAD of CHRIST, without applying to the Roman power. Whereas now, they no longer possessed it, as is evident in *Paul's* trial, both before *Felix*,

and Festus; and his appeal to *Caesar*. And here opens, and confirms, a blessed proof of Jacob's prophecy, Genesis 49:10. The Gentiles were now gathering to CHRIST. The sceptre of *Judah* was totally departed, and the *Shiloh* come. How blessed is it to trace the sweet evidences of our holy faith, thus by scriptural testimonies!

I must detain the Reader with an observation more, on what is said in this paragraph, of the Apostle's assertion, respecting the resurrection of CHRIST. *Festus* was astonished, he told *Agrippa*, that when he expected *Paul's* accusers to have brought forth a charge against him of some high crimes and misdemeanors; it was nothing but of certain questions, and superstitions: and particularly, said he, of *one* JESUS *which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive*. Reader! do mark the contempt with which this heathen spake of that glorious event, which is to you, and to me, our chief happiness, and greatest joy!

But, while this wretched man, considered this momentous truth as a trifle of no value to regard; let you and I rather advert to the conduct of *Paul*, and enquire how, or from what cause it was, the Apostle became so confident. Certain it is, that *Paul* had never seen CHRIST in the flesh, during our LORD'S ministry; for he saith himself, that he was as *one born out of due time*, 1 Corinthians 15:8. And that he was, many years after CHRIST'S return to glory, a bitter enemy to the cause of CHRIST, is also equally certain. As, therefore, he was not one of those witnesses *Peter* speaks of, *who were chosen*

before of GOD for this purpose to be his witnesses, who did eat and drink with JESUS after he arose from the dead; it becomes a subject of no small interest to enquire, how Paul got his assurance of CHRIST'S resurrection, and what it was, which made him so confident, that JESUS which was dead, he affirmed to be alive?

And here opens to us, a subject of peculiar sweetness and delight. For nothing can be more evident, than that *Paul's* positiveness in affirming, that this One glorious JESUS which had been dead, was alive, arose, from his own personal knowledge. JESUS himself had spoken to *Paul* from heaven, at his conversion, Acts 9:4-5. And JESUS had again made a *second* manifestation of himself to *Paul*, as it is written: Acts 22:17-21, and 1 Corinthians 15:8. And what confirmed yet more the whole in the Apostle's mind, of the resurrection of JESUS, were the blessed effects which followed, in his own heart. The resurrection of JESUS became a palpable truth with *Paul*, from his own. Well might the Apostle affirm, that this One LORD JESUS which was dead, was alive; because, CHRIST'S resurrection and return to glory, had been confirmed to *Paul's* heart by the blessed effects of it, in his resurrection by grace. And the same evidence rests now in the heart of every regenerated believer. Reader! you and I, and every child of GOD, in whose SPIRIT the HOLY GHOST witnesseth, that we are the children of GOD, possess the same witness in ourselves. By the descent of the HOLY GHOST upon our hearts, we prove the ascension, and consequently the resurrection of the LORD JESUS, having returned to glory, and sent him down. And,

from this best of all assurances, like *Paul*, we may speak of JESUS as once dead, but now affirm, that he is alive. This is the sweetest and most precious of all evidences!

ACTS 25:23-27

And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth. (24) And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. (25) But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. (26) Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and especially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. (27) For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him.

Notwithstanding all this parade of *Festus* and his Court, I should not have thought it worth detaining the Reader to have made any observations upon it, had it not been to have called his attention to those blessed testimonies, which arise out of it, respecting the LORD and his people, The LORD JESUS had told his disciples, that *they should be*[211] *brought before Governors and Kings for his sake, for a testimony against them*, Matthew 10:18. And JESUS had said the same to *Paul*, Acts 9:15-16, And, here we see it fulfilled. And *Paul* alludes to the same, when he saith *we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men!* 1 Corinthians 4:9. And, what a spectacle indeed, of derision, did the Apostle

appear, amidst such an host of infidels! But, what an object of honor, to the view of angels, and the world of the spirits of just men made perfect, looking on, and beholding the faithful Apostle! Hail! thou highly favored servant of thy LORD!

REFLECTIONS

READER! learn from *Paul's* history, in the unceasing pursuits of those men for his blood, the bitterness of heart in a state of nature, against the doctrine of grace; and be convinced, that in every individual of the fallen sons of *Adam*, the case is the same. *The carnal mind is enmity against GOD*. Oh! the blessedness, when brought out of this Adam-nature, by sovereign mercy; and brought into an heartfelt acquaintance, with the LORD JESUS CHRIST. None but they who know the truth, from a personal experience of its Almighty power, as *Paul* did, having part in the first resurrection, can, like him, enjoy it. But, where a saving work of GOD the HOLY GHOST, hath taken place in the soul, by regeneration; that person will have the same confidence as the Apostle had, and with the same holy joy, be always speaking, as he did, of One JESUS, who was dead, whom the heart affirms to be alive.

Blessed LORD JESUS! be thou everlastingly loved and adored, for thy grace, and wisdom, imparted to thy servant *Paul*, when thus ready to be swallowed up by his enemies. Surely, LORD, it was thy strength; made manifest in creature weakness. It was JESUS who taught him, in such a moment, to make an appeal to *Caesar*: though Caesar no more than

Festus was a friend to Paul, or his LORD. Here, LORD, thy promise was fulfilled in giving him *a word and wisdom, which all the adversaries of thy poor prisoner, could neither gainsay nor resist!* And thus, in a moment, their whole policy fell to the ground! And, thus the LORD is continually doing now, amidst the exercises of his people, by which they are *more than conquerors, through Him that loveth them.*

CHAPTER 26

CONTENTS

Paul is permitted to speak for Himself. He makes his Defence: declares his Conversion, and the Manner of it. He is interrupted by Festus. He again reassumes his Discourse, and speaks to Agrippa. The whole Court breakup, astonished at what they had heard, and separate.

ACTS 26:1-2

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: [212] (2) I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:

We shall enter at once into an apprehension of *Paul's* design in this defense, if we consider the frivolous and false charges, which indirectly the Jews had brought against him. A *pestilent fellow*, and a *mover of sedition*, the Orator *Tertullus* would have insinuated *Paul* was, by way of bringing him under the

Governor's displeasure, as an enemy to *Caesar*; but the conduct of the Apostle was too peaceable, and orderly, to suffer by such accusations. *Paul*, therefore, very wisely, entered not into the smallest defense of his conduct, in this department, but confined himself, to what referred to his attachment to the cause of CHRIST. That he had honored the temple, instead of prophaning it; was fulfilling the law, instead of breaking it; and giving the highest glory to GOD, instead of blaspheming GOD; the Apostle would fully prove, by shewing, that in preaching CHRIST all these things were included. *Paul*, therefore, enters with delight upon his defense, waves his hand, as was the custom of public speakers in those days to do, by way of calling attention, professeth himself happy in the opportunity afforded him, and begs in particular the patient indulgence of *Agrippa*, that he might go through the short, but interesting subject, which would explain the whole of his conduct, and fully prove his innocency.

ACTS 26:3-23

Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently. (4) My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; (5) Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. (6) And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: (7) Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. (8) Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? (9) I verily thought with myself,

that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. (10) Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. (11) And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. (12) Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, (13) At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. (14) And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. (15) And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. (16) But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; (17) Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, (18) To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (19) Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: (20) But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. (21) For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. (22) Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: (23) That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

The Reader will observe, (and therefrom I hope be led to observe yet more, how much the mind of the Apostle must have been under the blessed influence of the HOLY GHOST,) that the one great drift of all *Paul's* defense, was not his own defense, but in the defense of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and his full, and finished salvation. This was the great point *Paul* had in view. And, to establish this, he begins in a most masterly manner to shew, first, his original bitter hatred to and his Gospel; and then, to set forth the wonderful change wrought upon him, by his conversion, immediately from heaven, by the LORD JESUS CHRIST himself. No plan could have been so happily chosen, as this which *Paul* adopted. For if, as the Apostle proved, and in proof appealed to all the Jews who knew him from a youth, to confirm, he had been born, and lived, a very strict and rigid *Pharisee*; the question instantly arose, from whence this wonderful change? Paul answers it by declaring it was a call from Heaven. And how then could the Apostle be disobedient, to the heavenly vision?

But, while the Reader will remark with me *these* things, which both carry with them the highest, and most decided testimonies, in proof of divine truths; and no less hold forth, in a very blessed point of view, for the comfort of the Church,, the glorious account of *Paul's* conversion: there is one thing more, which I hope the Reader will not fail I to notice, which is highly important; I mean, the overruling power of GOD, in affording this renewed occasion, and in so public a manner, for the Apostle to go through the account once more, of his wonderful conversion, Surely this was the

LORD'S great design all along, in the imprisonment of *Paul*. Hence, he shall be apprehended at *Jerusalem*. A multitude shall assemble, both of Jews and Gentiles, upon the Occasion. And, while the one party would have killed him; and the other party would have had him examined by scourging, neither of them shall touch him to his hurt; but he shall boldly stand upon the stairs of the Castle, and rehearse before them all, the miraculous account of his Conversion. See Acts 21:30 to the end, and Acts 22 1-22.

In like manner, upon the occasion, as here related, at *Caesarea*, what a wonderful coincidence of circumstances are brought together to produce such an audience, as the present? Not only a large concourse of people of *Caesarea*, but this *Agrippa*, who was king of a large territory, as the history of those times shew, under the Roman emperor, and *Bernice*, and, no doubt, the usual attendants of Princes; all shall have rehearsed before them, *Paul's* history, *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear*; they shall be told of GOD'S sovereignty and grace to this man. And wherefore all this? The LORD JESUS answered this question, when silencing the fears of *Ananias*, at *Paul's* conversion. *Go thy way*, said the LORD unto him, *for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel*, Acts 9:15. And, here it is explained. Even though in chains, *Paul* shall twice deliver, in the most public manner possible, and before an immense congregation, (which, but for an overruling providence of the LORD, leading to it, never could have taken place;) the account of his conversion. The

people of *Jerusalem*, and the people of *Caesarea*, yea, and strangers from afar, shall be all brought together for this purpose, and shall hear it. Both Jews, and Gentiles, shall be assembled on this occasion, who never would have mingled in any religious worship; and shall receive this testimony to *the truth' as it is in* JESUS, whether under grace, for their everlasting joy, or in despising the means of grace, to their everlasting shame and confusion, Daniel 12:10.

And, Reader, before you pass away from the consideration of these things, as relating to the different audiences before whom *Paul* delivered in his testimony; I would beg of you to pause, and contemplate, if you can, to what extent this design of GOD the HOLY GHOST then reached to others, not present at those meetings, to whom the wonderful story must have been related, after those assemblies broke up, and the multitudes were scattered abroad, both far and near? Who shall say, what blessed effects followed, in the conversion of numbers, who heard these things; and where that hearing was accompanied with the gifts of the HOLY GHOST? Who shall calculate the blessedness, which, from that hour to the present, hath arisen, from GOD the HOLY GHOST, having caused the record of this miraculous conversion of *Paul* to be in his holy Scriptures, and commissioning the hearing; or the reading of it, in Churches, and families; and among the people? Yea, to ages yet unborn, the precious record of *Paul's* conversion must, and will have a blessed tendency, of the highest good; for we know, and from GOD the HOLY GHOST's own assurance concerning this man, that *it was for this cause*

he obtained mercy, that in him, first JESUS CHRIST might shew forth all long suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting, 1 Timothy 1:16: Hence, among other causes, of which, in the present short-sighted state of our faculties, we have no discernment, we here discover enough to admire, and in that admiration to adore, the wonderful design of GOD the HOLY GHOST, in the government of his Church, in opening such repeated opportunities for his servant proclaiming the circumstances of his conversion; and for causing double records to be made, and handed down, to all ages of his people, of an event, so full of grace to the Church, and of glory to GOD. Reader! will you not feel constrained, in the view of such rich, free, and unmerited mercy, (the relation of which hath been blessed to thousands,) to look up, and bless GOD the HOLY GHOST, for this instance, among numberless others, in giving to his Church, the repeated record of *Paul's* conversion?

I shall not think it necessary to go over the several parts of the Apostle's sermon; having already noticed some of the more striking passages, in the review of the account: Acts 9 and Acts 22. I therefore would refer the Reader to the Commentary on both those Chapters. I shall rather desire, in addition to what is there offered, that the Reader will make the whole review of the subject, somewhat more personal, that the gracious mercy of GOD the HOLY GHOST, in the record, as it concerns himself, may be blessed. Of all the arguments upon earth, as far as written testimonies can go, in proof of any one truth; none can produce greater, and few equal, to

this of *Paul's* conversion. When we contemplate what he here said, of the manner of his life from his youth: his zeal in the Jewish religion: his earnestness to promote it: his extravagant anger at the first, against CHRIST and his people: the astonishing change wrought by his conversion: and the whole of his eventful life, which followed: such an history, attested as it is, by every evidence that can be desired; cannot but carry conviction wherever it comes, as far as outward testimony can reach, of the truth it is intended to establish. But, my Reader will bear with me while I say, that if it goes no further than this, in obtaining the cold, uninterested consent of the understanding, without influencing by grace the heart; it is of little consequence, whether believed, or not. But, when by divine teaching, *Paul's* history carries some resemblance, however faint, to our own; and while we read his conversion, we know of a work of grace having passed in our own hearts every tittle of the abundant grace *Paul* speaks of, which was shewn him, we can fully subscribe to, and say as he did: *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that CHRIST JESUS came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief,* 1 Timothy 1:15.

ACTS 26:24-27

And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. (25) But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but I speak forth the words of truth and soberness. (26) For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. (27) King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.

It is well worth the Reader's notice, that the interruption *Festus* made to *Paul's* discourse, and the idea he had conceived that the Apostle was mad, is the very same conduct still pursued by all carnal men in their opposition to the Gospel, and the preachers of free grace in CHRIST. To the LORD JESUS himself the same was said, Mark 3:21. Yea, some went further, John 10:21. And his Apostles fell under similar reproach, 2 Corinthians 5:13. But, alas! the insanity is all on the other side. And the HOLY GHOST hath given the cause, 1 Corinthians 2:14-15.

Let the Reader notice also the boldness of *Paul*, when he said, that *Agrippa* could not be ignorant of what the whole *Roman* empire had sounded with; namely, the Person, death, and resurrection of the LORD JESUS! *Agrippa* himself had professed his belief in the Jews religion, as history records of him. And, consequently, he could not be ignorant what the Prophets had said of the *Messiah*. And, as the coming of CHRIST, his miracles, and ministry, his death on the cross, and the prodigies which attended that death, and his resurrection which followed, were not done in a corner, but as fully known and attested, as the light of the sun at noonday, in confirmation that He was the Messiah; *Paul* assumed it for a fact, that *Agrippa* must acknowledge their truth. And, under these impressions, he boldly put the question to the King, and as instantly answered it himself: *Believest thou the Prophets? I know that thou believest.*

ACTS 26:28-29

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. (29) And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

Agrippa's answer leads to a very solemn train of thoughts. How many of the *almost* Christians, but never in reality so, are now in the world, *have been* in all ages of the Church, and *will be* found in the last day? Doth the Reader know of such? Are their characters clearly definable? Yes! They cannot be mistaken. And, although they have different shades under the same title, yet, the whole may be, and are indeed, classed under the one general name of *unregenerate professors*. These are the *almost*, but never-to-be Christians. They were born under the meridian of Christianity, but never newborn in CHRIST, John 3:3.

Without running over a large field of observation by way of drawing the line, according to scriptural decision, between the *almost* and the *real* Christian; it will be sufficient to remark, that the *almost* Christian may have great light and understanding in head, when there is no grace in the heart. Such an one may profess great delight in hearing sermons, seem much affected under the word, apparently alive to the promotion of all charities, and the promotion of the[218] Lord's glory in the earth, and yet not a single act of true saving grace all the while hath passed upon his heart. Yea, he may go further. Some views of his own sinful state by nature he may have; some apprehensions of the Person and glory of CHRIST, in an historical knowledge of him, by reading or

hearing sermons; some sorrow for sin, with an apprehension of the consequences of unrepented sin, and the conviction that none but CHRIST can save from the wrath to come: these, and similar lessons may be learnt in nature's school, where the word of GOD is read, or heard, or preached; but without a better teaching, and the regenerating work of GOD the HOLY GHOST upon the soul, all, and much more, will leave the persons so taught, among the *almost* Christians, and never make them real followers of CHRIST in the regeneration. The HOLY GHOST by *Paul*, hath drawn the portrait of those men with a strong pencil, in his holy word, when he describes them as once *enlightened* with head knowledge; *tasting*, but not enjoying, the *heavenly gift* of his holy word; made *partakers of the* HOLY GHOST in his outward ministry and ordinances; *tasting*, so as to distinguish *the good word of* GOD from the word of man; but not as new-born babes desiring the sincere milk of the word, that they might grow thereby, and tasting *the powers of the world to come*, in miracles wrought in Christ's name, and to confirm his word, which in the early days they saw, yea, many of them, (as *Judas*,) wrought; but in all these, there is not a single word to shew, that GOD the HOLY GHOST had regenerated their persons; and, consequently, there is not a single act of the graces of the Spirit, which flow from regeneration, such as faith, love, and obedience, to manifest their regenerated nature; and, therefore, the whole of what is here said, may, and not unfrequently will, be found in the character of the *almost*, but never *real* Christian. See Hebrews 6:4- 6 and the Commentary upon the passage.

Let the Reader look at *Paul* for a contrast to this *almost* Christian, when in his very modest and unassuming answer, he said to *Agrippa*, *I would to GOD, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.* What tenderness and affection, arising from grace in the heart, were expressed in these words? Excepting the chains, in which he stood before them as a prisoner, which he wished not to his greatest natural enemy; neither the humble poverty of his circumstances in outward things in which he lived, and earned his bread by tent making; excepting these, it was the most cordial wish of his soul, if the LORD willed it, that all then present were, as he himself was, in SPIRITUAL things, and living in the enjoyment of them.

Reader! if you wish to behold the portrait of a *real* Christian, in the character of *Paul*, the HOLY GHOST hath fully drawn it. He hath shewn, that in the days of his unregeneracy, he was as all men by nature are, *sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.* But, (saith Paul,) *after that, the kindness and love of GOD our SAVIOR toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but, according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the HOLY GHOST; which he shed on us abundantly though JESUS CHRIST our SAVIOR,* Titus 3:3-6. Here we see in the first part, the original features of nature, in the universal tints of character by which all Adam's children are known, and in which they are all born,

and in which they all live and die, unless regenerated by grace. And here we see in the *second* part of this picture, the source of that vast change, which GOD the HOLY GHOST makes by his own Almighty power on the heart, when, by forming the nature anew, he makes them new creatures in CHRIST JESUS. So that they are now made *partakers of the divine nature, having*, through that grace imparted to them in their new-birth, *escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*, 2 Peter 1:1-4. And thus being regenerated by the HOLY GHOST, given by the FATHER to the SON, and redeemed from the Adam-nature of a fallen state by CHRIST, called with an holy calling, pardoned and justified by the blood and righteousness of CHRIST, sanctified in their grace union with CHRIST, and daily renewed by the HOLY SPIRIT; they are not *almost*, but *real* Christians, being *members of CHRIST'S body, his flesh, and his bones!* Ephesians 5:30.

Acts 26:30-32

And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: (31) And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. (32) Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.

The great end the LORD the SPIRIT had appointed by this meeting, being now accomplished, (I pray the Reader not to lose sight of this,) the business is over. The several hearers have now heard for their life, or death. *Paul's* sermon will at the last day be again brought forward, as the ministration of mercy or condemnation. The one class of mercy for the blessed opportunity, Hebrews 10:39. The other of condemnation, Psalm 1:7.

And now the assembly is broken up, the congregation separate, and the prisoner is sent back to his prison. He might have been set at liberty, said *Agrippa*, if he had not appealed unto *Caesar*. No, *Agrippa!* that must not be, for the LORD had shewed his servant, that he must bear witness also at *Rome*, Acts 23:11. How little and contemptible would this whole assembly have appeared, even in their own eyes, amidst all their pomp and splendor, could they but have seen the parts they were then made to act for the divine glory. They were to hear for their own condemnation, if not made *the savor of life unto life*; and they were to prepare for the sending the LORD's messenger and witness to *Rome*. *Howbeit*, (said the LORD of a similar character of old,) *he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so*, Isaiah 10:5-7. It is truly blessed to a child of GOD, to trace the LORD'S hand in all the LORD'S appointments. *My counsel shall stand*, saith the LORD, *and I will do all my pleasure*, Isaiah 46:10.

REFLECTIONS

IT will be a blessed improvement of this chapter, under the HOLY GHOST'S teachings, if by contemplating the different characters at this assembly; our souls are led to see how dignified was the poor prisoner in his chains, compared to the nobles in their mistaken splendor. Could any eye, have been opened to discern objects spiritually, while looking upon the meeting, as the Prophet's servant was in the Mount, he would have beheld the prisoner in the robes of JESUS's righteousness, and Festus and his royal host wearing the chains of sin, and prisoners to *Satan*. Oh! what mistaken views do we make of all the objects of time and sense, while the vail of nature's darkness is upon our hearts!

Reader! let you and I once more, (we never shall too often,) bless GOD the HOLY GHOST for the thrice record of *Paul's* conversion in his blessed word. Add a blessing to it, O LORD, and cause it to be a sweet savor in the souls of thy people, to numbers now on earth, as it hath been in times past, to numbers now in heaven. Yea, bless it to numbers yet unborn, even to endless generations! Amen.

CHAPTER 27

CONTENTS

We have here the Apostle entering on Ship-board, to be conducted to Rome. The Voyage is attended with danger. The LORD comforts Paul with a Visit in the Night. He foretells the Loss of the Ship, but of the saving of all the Crew. They are shipwrecked, but escape all to Land.

ACTS 27:1-8

And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band. (2) And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. (3) And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself. (4) And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. (5) And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. (6) And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein. (7) And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone; (8) And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea.

It is very blessed to watch the LORD'S dealings with his people. Here seems to have been an overruling providence of the LORD, in relation to this voyage, in that *Paul* should be accompanied with several dear friends and companions. *Luke*, the writer of the Acts, it should appear, from certain passages in *Paul's* writings, was with him in this voyage, 2 Timothy 4:11. Philemon 24. And, as he saith afterwards, when writing his last Epistle to *Timothy*, that he left *Trophimus* sick at *Miletus*, he must have been also with *Paul* at this time. And *Aristarchus* is mentioned by name, as here. This man, though but little known by us, we have reason to believe, was very dear to *Paul*; and what is infinitely more important, well-known in the book of life. He is spoken of, Acts 19:29; 20:4; Philemon 29. And we at length here of him as *Paul's* fellow-prisoner, Colossians 4:10. Oh! what multitudes have there been of the LORD'S faithful ones hidden from public view, like

some sweet flower of the desert which hath opened its beauties to the sun, and shed its perfumes to the air unnoticed, and unknown of men, but which will be found transplanted into the garden of the LORD, when the great day shall appear!

Do, Reader, remark the courteous behavior of *Julius* the Centurion towards *Paul*. The LORD gave him favor, as he did in the instance of *Joseph* with *Potiphar*, *Genesis* 39:1-6. And before that *Julius* and *Paul* parted, the Centurion found, as *Potiphar* had in the case of *Joseph*, what a blessed thing it is, to have the LORD'S people with us in every thing, *Acts* 27:24.

It must have been a refreshing season indeed to the disciples at *Sidon*, (for as *Tyre* and *Sidon* were nigh each other, no doubt, upon such an occasion they met, see *Acts* 21:3-4.) Here CHRIST himself exercised his ministry in the days of his flesh, *Matthew* 15:21. And we read that the Church in this place was made glad, when *Paul* and *Barnabas* passed through this neighborhood some time before. See *Acts* 15:3.

ACTS 27:9-19

Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them, (10) And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives. (11) Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul. (12) And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and

lieth toward the southwest and northwest. (13) And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete. (14) But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. (15) And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive. (16) And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat: (17) Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, struck sail, and so were driven. (18) And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; (19) And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

There is nothing more striking to represent the life of God's people in their passage through the world, than that of the storms and tempests of the deep. The Psalmist hath as accurately, as beautifully described it, when he saith, *They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep.* I beg the Reader to turn to the 107th Psalm (Psalm 107:23-31), and read the finest piece of writing on this subject the imagination can conceive. The Sacred Writer describes what *Paul* and his companions here felt, the raising of the stormy wind, the lifting up of the waves to heaven, and going down again to the depths beneath, the reeling of the people, and the melting of the heart through fear. Their crying to the LORD in their trouble, and the LORD'S delivering them from their distresses. Such is the voyage of life to the saints of GOD! Storms and tempests every where abound. But CHRIST is an *hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest!* And sweetly he manifests himself to them, as a

strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones, is as a storm against the wall, Isaiah 32:2; Isaiah 25:4.

I admire the very gracious behavior of *Paul* on this occasion, in admonishing the ship's company of the dangers they were about to encounter. No doubt, among the gifts of the SPIRIT, *Paul* possessed that of *prophecy*, 1 Corinthians 12:10. And, though in this first exercise of it before the crew, they very lightly regarded what he said; yet it laid the foundation for greater respect to what he said after. It hath been thought by some, that the fast here spoken of, was the great fast observed by the Jews on the Day of Atonement, Leviticus 23:27-28. The winter now approaching, and in those days, navigation being but very imperfectly known, sailing was considered dangerous.

ACTS 27:20-26

And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. (21) But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. (22) And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. (23) For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, (24) Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. (25) Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. (26) Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.

The description here given of the heavenly bodies affording so obscure a light, and the tempest of the sea raging so furiously, must have rendered the state of this ship's company very deplorable indeed. But, though all hope of being saved by human means was over, yet *Paul* knew the resource he had in the LORD. His confidence, therefore, so far from abating, gained strength, and his affectionate address to the crew, accompanied with a declaration of the message he had received from the LORD, had a very blessed effect, as it appears, upon the minds of the people. His foretelling that they should be cast upon a certain island, was no doubt intended as a proof, that when the event took place, they might put the greater confidence in what he had told them of the LORD.

I must not suffer the Reader to pass on, without observing, that a beautiful instruction of a spiritual nature ariseth from hence, which the believer in CHRIST would do well to keep in view. In the voyage to the city of the living GOD, the Church, and every individual of the Church, more or less, meet with storms and tempests, threatening shipwreck. And not unfrequently, while suffering the fury of the waves of the sea, the heavenly bodies seem to suspend their light. No Sun of righteousness for many days can they discover, neither do they find light from the ministers of JESUS, as the stars he holds in his right hand. And, while these things are so, unless great grace, like that given to the Apostle, be given to the LORD'S people, all hopes of being saved, are for the time lost. They indeed, who like him, can bless a taking GOD, as well as

a giving GOD, can, and do, live upon the LORD, when all other resources dry up.

ACTS 27:27-38

But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country; (28) And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms. (29) Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. (30) And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under color as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, (31) Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. (32) Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off. (33) And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. (34) Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. (35) And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat. (36) Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat. (37) And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. (38) And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.

How truly interesting the whole narrative is. And what a lovely view the LORD hath given us of *Paul*. No doubt, his cheerfulness in the midst of the storm, very much contributed to animate the whole ship's company. I do not apprehend, that when *Paul* admonished them to eat some food, saying, that it was the *fourteenth day* they had fasted, and had taken

nothing, that he meant they had been all that while without the smallest food. For strictly, and properly speaking, had this been the case, life would have been, in some instances at least, if not in all, destroyed for want of food. But I rather suppose, that he meant they had not, on account of the storm; taken their usual meals in a regular manner; but only caught a morsel of food now and then, as the tempest would suffer them. Some have read the passage different from our translation, and rendered it, as if *Paul* had said, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried for, and continued fasting, having taken nothing, that is, ye have continued this whole day fasting. So that in this sense, they had not fasted but this day. And, certainly, this sense is much more probable, for in the other view of fourteen whole days' fasting of two hundred, threescore, and sixteen persons, nothing short of a miracle could have kept them all alive.

It hath been supposed by some, that *Paul* made this meal somewhat sacramental, by taking bread as CHRIST did, and giving thanks. But it appears to me to be a wrong idea. The Ordinance of the Supper would have been unsuited to the whole ship's company in their then circumstances. And we can hardly suppose that the Apostle would have brought that sacred service, which is peculiarly and specially intended for the sweet memorial of CHRIST'S death in the LORD'S family, to be received in common with those who know not the LORD.

ACTS 27:39-44

And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it

were possible, to thrust in the ship. (40) And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore. (41) And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmovable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves. (42) And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape. (43) But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land: (44) And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

How our nature shudders at the cruel and desperately wicked purposes of the soldiers, in the proposal they made to kill the prisoners. Reader! do observe, not all the horrors of the shipwreck they had escaped, could soften the hardened nature of the unawakened mind. The devil raged more in their hearts than the storm of the sea upon their bodies. But, while we trace this temptation to the devil, do not fail to remark also, how the hand of the LORD was in this business, by his gracious influence on the mind of the Centurion, to counteract and defeat their inhuman policy. Oh! how blessed is it to trace the LORD'S mercies both in providence and grace! Neither Jews nor Gentiles at *Jerusalem* and *Caesarea*, neither tempest of sea, or the raging of men or devils on land, shall destroy *Paul*; for the LORD hath said, *Fear not Paul, thou must be brought before Caesar. Be of good cheer, for as thou hast testified of me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome*, Acts 23:11. And how often may it be seen in the life

of every child of GOD, both in spiritual concerns, and temporal, that *when the enemy cometh in like a food, the SPIRIT of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him?* Isaiah 59:19.

How very beautiful, yet simple, the language with which the chapter closeth: *And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.* Yes! The Lord had said it, and so it must be accomplished. Even from the mouth of an enemy, the LORD hath forced the confession; *GOD is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?* Numbers 33:19. And, depend upon it, so it shad come to pass with all the LORD'S family, embarked as they are with CHRIST, and passing through the storms and tempests of the present time state of the Church. JEHOVAH hath given to his dear Sons all them that sail with him. And *he will bring them unto the haven, where they would be! Oh! that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!* Psalm 107:30-31.[227]

REFLECTIONS

How blessedly the Prophet *Nahum* spake, when he said, *the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind, and in the storm!* And how fully proved, was that way manifested, in all the circumstances of this voyage? Well might the Apostle say, *in perils often, in perils in the sea, in perils among false*

brethren. But, said he, as upon another occasion, *out of them all, the LORD delivered me*. Reader! it is well to be brought into exercises, that we may discern the LORD'S hand in bringing out. The loudest cries of the awakened soul, are, when all is dark and discouraging, and when neither sun nor stars appear for many days. A child of GOD will then indeed pray, and pray hard, and in earnest, while the hand of chastening is upon him, and the grace of the LORD is within him, leading him forth in acts of faith and trust, upon the LORD his righteousness. Who of the LORD'S people but would gladly pass through a storm, like this of *Paul's*, to have *Paul's* LORD with them, in the storm in such visions of the night? Oh! the unspeakable felicity, whether in storms or calms, in rough or smooth seasons, when a soul can say, there stood by me this night, the LORD and Angel of the Covenant, *whose I am, and whom I serve*. Reader! it is not simply an act of faith, but faith is then become the substance, realized into possession; when you and I, can, on sure grounds, say, I am GOD'S property by grace;. sure I am, that I shall be equally enabled to say, then am I GOD'S care by his covenant love and faithfulness, LORD! help all thy redeemed to cast all their care upon thee, and into thy hands; for JESUS will bring home the whole, and every one to land, and bring them in to his everlasting haven, *where they would be!*

CHAPTER 28

CONTENTS

The LORD disposeth the Hearts of a barbarous People, on whose Ground Paul and the Ship's Company were cast, to receive them kindly. Paul healeth the Sick in the Island. They at length depart, and go to Rome. Paul preacheth in Rome two Years.

ACTS 28:1-6

And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. (2) And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. (3) And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. (4) And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. (5) And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. (6) Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

This island on which the shipwrecked crew, *Paul* and his company landed, is the place that is now called *Malta*, in the Mediterranean Sea. We are not to understand by those islanders being celled barbarous people, that it hath respect as much to their manners, as to their language. Their courtesy to *Paul*, and the rest of the ship's company, was great indeed. But it is supposed, that they are the rather called barbarous, because their dialect was a broken mixture of different tongues, so that it became difficult to understand them, or to be understood by them, when speaking in the pure language of the Latin, used at that time by the *Romans*;

or in the Greek, by, those of *Greece*. But, certainly, it was the LORD which gave *Paul* and his company favor with this people, or they would hardly have received with so much kindness, so large a company, as two hundred, threescore, and sixteen souls; much less have entertained them so long as they remained there, and laded them with such things as they needed, on their departure, (Acts 28:10-11.) Reader! it is always blessed to observe, the LORD'S predisposing the minds of men to favor his people. On *Paul's* account, the men of *Malta* shall treat them all kindly. For JESUS's sake, his redeemed shall be taken care of, and fed, if it be needful, and rather than want food, at their enemies table. See Exodus. 12:36; Isaiah 16:4.

The circumstance of this viper seems to have been graciously ordained by the LORD, to answer much good. By the miracle of *Paul's* safety, from the bite of the venomous reptile, the LORD proved that scripture, Mark 16:18 and Luke 10:19. And, from the different sentiments, induced in the minds of those islanders, from what they saw; first, in supposing him a murderer, and then making a transition to fancy him a GOD; who shall say, what might follow by grace on the hearts of some of them, during the three months *Paul* remained there, in bringing them to the knowledge of the truth.

ACTS 28:7-10

In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. (8) And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul

entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. (9) So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed: (10) Who also honored us with many honors; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.

There is somewhat very interesting in the account of this *Pallas*. He must have been a man of great generosity, as well as wealth. He had no consciousness who this guest was, when he took him in. He reminds one of the patriarchs, when, like *Abraham* and *Lot*, they received angels as strangers. And, how graciously the LORD, of *Paul* took the kindness, in the recompense he enabled *Paul* his servant to make him and his people, in healing the sick of the island. And who shall make the calculation of all the mercies which they might have received beside? It is said, that *Paul* went in, and prayed, and laid his hands on the father of *Publius*, and healed him. And may we not hope, the souls of some of those islanders were brought acquainted with the LORD JESUS CHRIST by *Paul's* ministry, while he was blessed of the LORD to their bodies?

ACTS 28:11-16

And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux. (12) And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days. (13) And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli: (14) Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome. (15) And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum, and The Three Taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage. (16) And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to

the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.[230]

We have here the Apostle brought to his journeys end. And thus the LORD's promise was made good. How welcome *Paul* was to the disciples at *Rome*, may he inferred from many of them coming so, far to meet him. *Appii forum* could hardly be less than *fifty* miles, and the three taverns, not less than *thirty*. Surely the LORD sent them, and *Paul* considered it so, for he found increasing confidence from the sight of them. And thus the LORD frequently strengthens the hands and hearts of his people, in their mutual love and sympathy with each other, and all in Him.

ACTS 28:17-22

And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. (18) Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. (19) But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had aught to accuse my nation of. (20) For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. (21) And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee. (22) But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

It is a little strange, that *Paul's* enemies the Jews, both at *Caesarea* and *Jerusalem*, had not sent their hue and cry after

him, before his arrival at *Rome*. But perhaps, it may be accounted for on this ground. The Jews were afraid to appear against *Paul* before the Emperor at *Rome*. For, though the edict passed by *Claudius*, which drive all the Jews from Rome, (Acts 18:2) became null at his death, and *Nero*, the then emperor, had not as yet troubled himself about them, (though afterwards he became a bitter enemy both to the Christians and the Jews) yet, recollecting that law of *Claudius* they thought it prudent, perhaps, to remain quiet.

Let the Reader observe, with what contempt they spake of the faith of CHRIST. They called it a sect, and one that was every where spoken against. Reader! do not deceive yourself, neither be deceived by others. The pure faith of the gospel, which ascribes the *whole* of salvation to JESUS, unmingled with men's works, is as much spoken against now, and by numbers who profess the gospel, as the faith once delivered to the saints, was of old by the Jews. And that solemn question of JESUS, was never more suited than now, to be brought home to the hearts and consciences of all who profess his truths; *when the SON of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*

ACTS 28:23-29

And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. (24) And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. (25) And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake

the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers, (26) Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: (27) For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. (28) Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. (29) And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

What a delightful discourse must this have been? From morning till evening it continued. What a scope of Scripture the Apostle took in, for one end of the Old Testament to the other? But, what was the result? Namely, that which hath always been, and always must be, where the congregation is made up, as it was here, and as it is for the most part every where, of a mingled company; they who belong to CHRIST, and they who do not. And, it is worthy the Reader's closest observation, that in the application *Paul* made of that memorable scripture, taken from the Prophet, and which *Paul* here expressly saith, was not the words of, the Prophet, but of GOD the HOLY GHOST; the LORD defines the character of those to whom it is said, *Go unto this people!* The LORD doth not say, Go tell my people. Oh! no. Here the line is drawn. But go tell *this* people. And this suits *all* people, of every age and nation, whether Jews or Gentiles, whose final rejection of the Word of Grace, fully proves, that they are here intended, and marked in their true character. And so infinitely important are those words, which GOD the HOLY GHOST spake, in deciding this

solemn truth, that the LORD the SPIRIT hath been pleased to have it recorded, (after he had spoken it by the Prophet,) no less than six times in his holy word, Matthew 13:14; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40. Here in this place (Acts 28) and Romans 11:8. Reader! ponder it well!

ACTS 28:30-31

And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, (31) Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

This was a blessed season to the Church at *Rome*, which the LORD JESUS granted them. And, from the awful character of the then emperor *Nero*, under whose cruelty afterwards, both *Peter* and *Paul* suffered martyrdom, we can only ascribe it to the LORD JESUS, that he lulled this wretched prince asleep, while *Paul* thus for two whole years was preaching to the people of GOD. Supposing, what is generally believed, that *Festus* detained *Paul* a year; *Felix*, we know, confined him *two*; Acts 24:27, and, here again, *two years* at *Rome*; the whole made *five*. But, it was the Church's mercy, that during the last confinement, he had not only time to preach, but leisure and direction from the LORD, to write those blessed Epistles, which have been made so blessed to the Church, and will be, till time shall be no more. The Epistle to the *Ephesians*, was evidently written at this time, see Ephesians 3:1, and the date at the end. *Colossians* also, (Colossians 4:18) and date. To *Philemon* (Philemon 9-10) and date. *Philippians*, Philippians 1:7; Philippians 1:13; Philippians 1:16.

and date. And, it is more than probable, that it was at the same time he wrote, and sent his Epistles to *Galatia* and the *Hebrews*. See the date of each. Some have supposed, that *Paul* at the end of the two years, was brought to trial, and suffered martyrdom. But this could not be. For his Epistle to *Philippi* speaks of the confidence he had of being freed, Philippians 1:25 and Philippians 2:16-24. And his second Epistle to *Timothy* was written *two years* after, and is said in the date, to have been written from *Rome*, when *Paul* was brought before Nero the *second* time. And in this Epistle, *Paul* then speaks of his expectation of death, Acts 4:6.

REFLECTIONS

READER! let us bless GOD the HOLY GHOST for those precious Acts of his Apostles in his Church, for most blessed and delightful they are, as monuments of the LORD'S grace in his servant's ministry. Think what multitudes now in glory, enjoyed the sweet savor of them, while on earth. Think how daily now the LORD is blessing them to his people. And, think what numbers yet unborn, will in succession rise up to the enjoyment of them, when you and I shall have been gathered to our fathers, and have seen corruption. Let us close our perusal of this sweet book of GOD, with thanks to the Almighty Author of it, for all the mercy shewn in it, and by it, to ourselves, and to all that are past. And let our prayers be added, that the LORD may continue to bless its use to endless generations. Amen.

THE EPISTLE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

TO THE

Romans

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

We here enter upon the inspired writings of the Apostle *Paul*. They may well be called inspired; *for Paul* himself was taught by the HOLY GHOST, to tell the Church, that *all Scripture is given by inspiration of GOD*. So that in truth, GOD the SPIRIT is the Author, and his Servants are but the Pen-men of all the holy records. And hence we do right, when at any time we make quotations from the Word of GOD, instead of saying, (as is but too commonly done,) the Apostle, whose name the writing bears, saith thus, or thus: We consider GOD the HOLY GHOST himself the speaker, by his servant, and give the Lord the glory. For this would tend, under GOD, to keep alive in our remembrance, both the Person and authority of Him that speaks; and cause us to look beyond the words *which man's wisdom teacheth, to the words which the HOLY GHOST teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual*.

The Epistle to the *Romans*, is placed first in point of order to all the writings of the Apostle *Paul*. But this priority is not on

account of the *time* when written, for many of the Epistles which bear his name, were written before it. Perhaps it stands first in the list of *Paul's* Epistles, partly by reason of its bulk, being larger than all his other writings, and partly on being directed to the Church of the chief city in the *Roman* Empire.

The persons to whom it is addressed are said to be *Romans*. By which is meant, not the whole body of the people who lived at *Rome*; but the Church of GOD in that place. *Paul* indeed, declares as much, in the opening of the Epistle, when directing it: *to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints*. It is highly needful, that this should be always kept in view. And, not only in relation to this Epistle of *Paul* to the *Romans*, which is now before us, but in all the writings of the servants of the Lord, in their Epistles. And, I take occasion from hence to remark to the Reader, the great importance of the thing itself. For, to the general inattention on this subject, must be ascribed the sad perversion, which is not infrequently made, of particular passages in those holy writings, to wrong purposes. I mean, when the carnal and ungodly make application of certain words and promises found in them to themselves, and the world at large; which, if properly considered, would be found as belonging only to the Lord's people.

The place, and time of writing of this Epistle by *Paul*, may be easily learnt from the date, which is given in the close of it, and from several incidental passages we meet with here and there in the different parts of it. He dates it from *Corinth*. And in the last Chapter, he tells the Church at *Rome*, that *Gaius, his host, and Erastus, the chamberlain of the city*, (that is, the city of *Corinth*,) *sent their salutations to the Church, Romans*

16:23. And this is further confirmed, by what the Apostle saith elsewhere, 1 Corinthians 1:14; Acts 18: 8. Moreover, *Phoebe*, by whom *Paul* sent this Epistle, is said to be a servant of the Church at *Cenchrea*, a small seaport of the *Corinthians*, about eight miles from the city, Romans 16:1-2. And, from these particulars, it is no difficult matter to discover the *time* when the Apostle sent it to the Church; perhaps about the year of our LORD GOD 57, when *Paul* was on the eve of departure from *Corinth*, see Acts 20:2-3.

But the most important point to be attended to, in these general observations, by way of introduction to the Epistle, is the enquiry, what was the great and leading object GOD the HOLY GHOST might be supposed to have in view, in sending so blessed a portion of his holy word to the Church. And this, be it spoken to the Lord's glory, and the Church's happiness, is as plain and evident as if written with a sun-beam. The one chief doctrine taught in it to the Church, is the method of the sinner's acceptance before GOD, *of justification alone, through faith, by the LORD JESUS CHRIST*. This glorious truth runs through the whole Epistle, like one continued golden chain, linked together in all its bearings, and may be seen, more or less, in every Chapter. And the doctrine is set forth in such plain and clear terms, as if GOD the SPIRIT had determined, for the Church's happiness, that no possible mistake should arise, in the minds of any of his people, when taught of Him, on a point of such infinite consequence. Hence he shews, that this method of GOD's own providing of justification, in and by the LORD JESUS CHRIST, is totally distinguished *from*, and wholly unconnected *with* the law, either in whole, or in part: and, that an obedience to the precepts of the law, hath not the

smallest share in contributing to the merciful design of Jehovah, in this plan of salvation. All is the result of free sovereign grace. Christ is here set forth as the One ordinance of heaven. Salvation is shewn to be in no other. Christ is the sole cause. And, even the sweet and precious influences of GOD the HOLY GHOST, which manifest themselves in the hearts and lives of the redeemed, are shewn to be the blessed *effects*, and not in part the *cause*, of justification. The leading tenor and language of this blessed Epistle, runs, through the whole of it, to this effect; *being justified freely by the grace of GOD, through the redemption which is in CHRIST JESUS*, Romans 3:24.

The Reader will enter upon the perusal of this Epistle, and have a better apprehension of the whole contents of it, if I previously give him a brief analysis of the several Chapters.

The Apostle begins from the platform of the subject, at his first Chapter, with describing the miserable state of every man by nature, in consequence of the fall; and, in the instance of the city of *Rome*, at that time advanced to the greatest height of human science, but sunk to the lowest degree of profligacy, he fully proves, that *the world, by wisdom, knew not GOD*. From the Gentile, he next goes on to the Jew, and in his *second* and *third* Chapters, states a faithful account of that highly-favored nation. But here, as in the former instance, he makes it abundantly plain and evident, that all are alike included under sin: and that *by the deeds of the law can no flesh be justified before GOD*, Romans 3:19-20. Foreseeing, however, that some objections might be made to arise among those who prided themselves in their being descended from *Abraham*, as if the case of that great

Patriarch became an exception to this statement of universal corruption; the Apostle, in *his fourth* Chapter, takes up the full force of the objection on this ground, and proves, in *Abraham's* instance, the truth of the doctrine which he had before asserted. He shews most fully and decidedly, that *Abraham* himself was actually justified by faith in Christ, even when he was in a state of uncircumcision. And that in fact *the sign of circumcision* was appointed him, as *a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised*, Romans 4:10-11.

Having thus most clearly and blessedly proved the truth of the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ, by such palpable evidences, the Apostle's mind seems to have been led out in the vast comprehension of the glorious subject, as he had been led to write it, in those *four Chapters*: and therefore in *the fifth*, he runs back to the very beginning of time, and, in stating the fall of *Adam*, and the Church in him, the Apostle is led to shew, that, as misery and ruin came by this *first Adam*, so blessedness and salvation came by the *second Adam*, the LORD JESUS CHRIST. He proves here, with equal clearness and force of truth, that it is the goodness and grace of God, to bring the Church out of that Adam-corruption, by a means in which they have no part in the performance, as they were involved in an original ruin, to which, by actual transgression, they did not contribute. *As by the offence of one, (saith the Apostle,) judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life*, Romans 5:18.

The *sixth, seventh, and eighth* Chapters, are directed to set forth the blessedness of the dispensation, that *being justified by faith, and having peace with GOD through our LORD JESUS CHRIST*, the persons of believers are freed from all condemnation; and, from their union with Christ, they partake in his triumphs over sin, death, hell, and the grave. And the Apostle very fully shews, that so far are these privileges from tending to relax the motives, to a corresponding life of sanctity and holiness, such principles become the only source to give life to it, and ensure it. The Apostle speaks with an holy indignation and abhorrence of the bare suspicion, that they, who by union with Christ, are dead to sin, could live any longer therein. He denies it, as a thing impossible, Romans 6:1-2. And very sure it is, that where justification by faith *in* Christ, springs out of a grace union with Christ, (and where this is not the case there can be no justification,) the most ample security is made for every thing that is blessed, in life and conversation. *For, (saith the Apostle,) as many as are led by the SPIRIT of GOD, they are the Sons of GOD*, Romans 8:14. *And if any man have not the SPIRIT of Christ, he is none of his*, Romans 8:14.

In the *ninth, tenth, and eleventh* Chapters, the Apostle most blessedly dwells upon the grace and mercy of Jehovah, in his threefold character of persons, in this high dispensation of his sovereignty and holiness. And here he manifests the Almightyness of the teaching he was under, when he wrote this Epistle. He speaks with such humbleness of soul, while bowing down under a sense of Jehovah's wisdom and power in, his appointment of things, as carries with it the highest testimony that GOD the HOLY GHOST guided the Apostle's pen.

The *twelfth*, *thirteenth*, and *fourteenth* Chapters, together with a part of the *fifteenth*, are directed to shew the Church what blessed effects will follow from those gracious principles formed in the heart, where the Lord's people are living in a state of justification, by faith in Christ, before GOD. For, while Christ is lived upon by faith, the SPIRIT of Christ dwells in the heart, and induceth every thing that is truly blessed in life and practice. Christ being made the *sole cause* of salvation, the SPIRIT of Christ, in the believer, manifest the *effects*, as the sole work of GOD the SPIRIT. And these things are not spoken so much as *precepts*, but as *promises*; not so much in a way of *bidding*, as *enabling*: similar to what the Lord JESUS said to his disciples; *Abide in me, and I in you. Continue ye in my love*: that is, ye shall abide in me; ye shall continue in my love; and I will abide in you, John 15:4-9. See Commentary there.

And thus the Apostle having accomplished the great design which GOD the HOLY GHOST had in view, when dictating this Epistle to the Church, *Paul* concludes the whole in the remainder of the *fifteenth* and the *sixteenth* Chapters, with his blessing and his prayers, accompanied with the affectionate remembrances of the brethren with him to the people, and desiring an interest in their prayers for him, in his person and ministry. And he closeth all, with giving *glory to GOD through JESUS CHRIST*.

Reader! I have only to call upon you, before we enter on the Epistle, to join me in spirit before the Throne, that the teachings of the same Almighty Lord, which guided the Apostle's pen, may guide our hearts, that in the reading of it,

we may be made wise unto salvation, *through faith which is in CHRIST JESUS*. Amen.

CHAPTER 1

CONTENTS

Paul opens the Epistle with declaring his Apostleship. He salutes the Church, with the Profession of his brotherly Love: declares his willingness to visit them; and draws a faithful, but melancholy Picture of the Ungodly.

ROMANS 1:1-6

(1) Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (2) (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures,) (3) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; (4) And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: (5) By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name; (6) Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:

The Apostle very properly begins his address to the Church, with his own name and character, by way of grounding his authority in writing to them. He declares himself to be not only a servant of JESUS CHRIST, but called to be an Apostle, and separated to this service by GOD. So that, here is indirectly, an acknowledgment of the whole Persons of the Godhead; and not unsimilar to what we meet with in the writings of the other Apostles. See Jude 1; 1 Peter 1:2. And here, once for all, let it be observed, that the distinguishing office of an Apostle, made it necessary for *Paul*, to make out his just claim to that character. An Apostle, was not only one

who received his authority immediately from Christ; but the very name and office implied, in the person executing it, one that was a witness of Christ's resurrection. So *Peter*, at the election of *Matthias*, in the room of the traitor *Judas*, declared it to be the design of the office, Acts 1:21-22. Now, *Paul* was qualified to be an Apostle, having seen, and heard Christ, from heaven, Acts 9:4; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 1 Corinthians 15:8. And his ordination also, was by the HOLY GHOST. See Acts 13:1-4 and Commentary there. And he was separated, or set apart, by GOD the Father, from the womb for that purpose. See Galatians 1:15; Jeremiah 1:4-5; Luke 1:15-17.

The Apostle next most properly adverts, to the design of his ministry, and the particular object, for which he wrote to the *Romans*, The whole is of Christ, GOD-Man, and the momentous things connected with the revelation of the Son of GOD, from heaven. This had been indeed the sum and substance of all the writings and preachings of the Prophets of GOD, in all ages: but now, by the open manifestation Christ hath made of himself, in substance of our flesh, *it* became more fully known. And *Paul* dwells upon that feature of character, in this grace, the resurrection of Christ from the dead; because, this glorious act, not only most compleatly proved his own eternal power, and GODHEAD, but also, as decidedly manifested his oneness, and union, in all the perfections, and distinguishing characters, which constitute GODHEAD, in common with the Father and the HOLY GHOST: each glorious Person, in that act of the resurrection, having put their Almighty hand to the work. *Paul* saith, that Christ is declared to be the Son of GOD with power by this very deed. But, had Christ been raised from the dead, by the power of

GOD the Father only; or by the SPIRIT of holiness only; or by both, without Christ having an hand in it: the resurrection, in either case, would not have declared him thereby to have been the Son of GOD with power. There would have been then no more a proof of GODHEAD, in the resurrection of Christ, than in the resurrection of any other body. But if, as was the case, when JESUS laid down his life *which no mart could take from him*, he himself *took it again*; and when *put to death in the flesh*, he *quickenened himself by his SPIRIT*; even his own eternal power and GODHEAD: here, his GODHEAD was compleatly proved. And hence, as this scripture states it, and is confirmed elsewhere, he was declared to be the Son of GOD with power; meaning, his own power, for nothing of the power of any other could have declared his GODHEAD, John 10:18; 1 Peter 3:18; John 5:21; John 11:25-26. And, in further proof of the union of the divine nature, Christ's resurrection is declared to have been the express act of the Holy Three in One, who bear record in heaven. Here it is ascribed to the Son of GOD himself, and to the SPIRIT of holiness; and elsewhere to GOD the Father, whose grace in raising Christ's body is spoken of as a pledge of raising up his members by his own power also, 1 Corinthians 6:14. Reader! do not hastily dismiss this view of the subject, for it is blessed. JESUS! (your JESUS, if so be the SPIRIT of JESUS dwells in your heart,) first offered himself without spot to GOD the Father through his own eternal SPIRIT, without spot to GOD *for your offences*; and then, by his own power, with the same SPIRIT of holiness, quickened himself, to rise again, *for your justification*, Hebrews 9:14; Romans 9:25.

ROMANS 1:7

To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I beg the Reader to pause over this verse, in order that he may enter into a right apprehension, of what constitutes the Church of God. And, I do it the rather at this place, because the subject, once clearly understood, will minister to much information on the same point, upon similar occasions, to be met with in the word of God. It is to the Church, *Paul* sends this Epistle, yea, all his Epistles. And all the Epistles of the Apostles, are directed to the Church in like manner. And the Church is declared to be *the beloved of God, called to be saints. Beloved of God, from everlasting, Jeremiah 31:3, and chosen in Christ before all worlds, Ephesians 1:4.* And, as these acts of free grace and favor, became the ground-work of all blessedness from all eternity: so, in proof, they are *called* to be saints, in the time-state of the Church, upon earth. Not born saints, but new-born; not making themselves saints, either in whole, or in part; but made so altogether by sovereign grace, resulting from sovereign love. *So* that, from the everlasting purpose, counsel, and will, of Jehovah, in his threefold character of Persons, the Church owes her Being in Christ, before all time; and having been beloved of God, and called to be saints, they are blessed in Christ with grace, during the whole of their time-state here below, and blessed in Christ in all his communicable *glory* and happiness, *to* all eternity. If the Reader be enabled, under divine teaching, to have this view of the Church always in remembrance; he will find the sweetness of it, in the several parts of the Word of God, in discovering the application of many a gracious portion, in direct reference to the Church of God, distinguished from the carnal world.

Neither at our entrance on those writings of the Apostles, may we too hastily pass over the very sweet apostolical benediction we meet with in the beginning, for the most part, of all their Epistles. Here the Apostle prays *for grace and peace*, and sometimes he connects with those twin blessings, *mercy* also; for Christ is himself mercy in the fullest and most comprehensive sense of the word, yea, *the mercy promised*, Luke 1:72. And as these blessings are the gracious effects which flow from the covenant-love and favor of Jehovah, in his threefold character of persons, towards the Church in Christ; so the Apostle prays as he opens his Epistles, with this benediction, that they may proceed from GOD *our Father and the LORD JESUS CHRIST*. By which I humbly apprehend is meant, (as the Apostle elsewhere, when closing one of his Epistles, expresseth,) that both the beginning and the end may have a beautiful correspondence, he prays that *the grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the love of GOD, and the communion of the HOLY GHOST, be with the Church*. Amen. 2 Corinthians 13:14.

It were hardly necessary to detain the Reader with defining what is included in those great branches of the Lord's favor to his Church In Christ, *grace* and *peace*. Every one that reads the word of GOD with an enlightened eye, must perceive, that the terms carry with them a comprehension of all blessings, suited to the present time-state of the Church. *Grace*, in all its properties, original and eternal, in the first manifestations of it, and flowing from the same unceasing fountain, in all the after acts of it. Electing, regenerating, calling, redeeming, justifying, adopting, sanctifying, renewing, confirming, strengthening; yea, in short, all grace. *Peter*, the Apostle, on

this account was directed to call GOD, *the GOD of all grace*, 1 Peter 5:10, which teacheth, that GOD is not only in himself, towards his Church and people, grace in his very nature and essence; but also, that all the grace he hath is for them. And what endears it yet more, is, that the several parts and portions of grace, in all the infinite varieties of it, the Lord knoweth what each child will want, during the whole time-state of their continuance here below; he lays it up for them; hath each portion separate for them; keeps it for them to the moment of need; and gives it out with such a sweetness of love and favor, as makes it doubly blessed, coming immediately from the Lord's own hand, and coming with his love marked on it, in the very time of need. I pray the Reader to turn to some few scriptures in proof, Genesis 22:11-14; Psalm 59:10; 2 Corinthians 12:8-9; Philippians 4:19; Hebrews 4:14-16. And in like manner, *peace* takes in every blessing of time and eternity. Our peace is Christ himself. The Prophet, ages before Christ's incarnation, was taught to tell the Church, that *He should be our peace, when the Assyrian should come into our land*, Micah 5:5. And the Apostle sums up the whole mystery of godliness, when he saith, *He is our peace, having made peace through the blood of his cross*, Ephesians 2:14; Colossians 1:20. In short, Christ is the everlasting peace of his people, *in GOD*, and *with GOD*. And well might the Apostle begin every Epistle with praying for it; for Christ, from all eternity, is both the means and the end, the source and fountain, in whom, and from whom all peace flows. He is the great restorer of peace to all the breaches sin and Satan have made in the time-state of the Church. It is He which brings his redeemed into peace and favor with GOD, and with our own consciences; takes away the natural enmity

of our minds; and having opened a new and living way for our return to GOD by his blood, ever liveth to keep it open by his intercession. Precious JESUS! what a sweet thought is it to my soul, that amidst all the tribulation of the world, *in thee I have peace!*

ROMANS 1:8-12

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. (9) For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; (10) Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you. (11) For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; (12) That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

I beg the Reader to observe, how the Apostle begins his subject to the Church, after he had finished his prayers to GOD, and implored grace and peace for the people. He enters upon his Epistle with thanksgiving. Reader! nothing can more effectually call forth praises to the Lord, when the heart is tinder the teaching of GOD the SPIRIT, than a deep sense of the Lord's mercies to the Church. Though *Paul* had no personal knowledge of the saints at *Rome*, yet knowing by their call to GOD in Christ, that they were beloved of GOD, they were beloved to *Paul* also. There is a oneness of heart and affliction among the saints of GOD, which proves a kindred of souls, and manifests an union with each other, from an union with the Lord JESUS. No wonder the Apostle longed to see them, whose faith carried with it such an honorable testimony every where.

But what I would more particularly request the Reader to notice, is, what *Paul* expected from seeing them, namely, that while through grace he might be enabled to impart to them some spiritual gift, he himself, though so great an Apostle, might receive from them comfort. It were devoutly to be wished that this statement of *Paul's* was but more generally regarded in our Churches, both by ministers and people. The Apostle here speaks of *a mutual faith*. And, surely, as the faith is the same in all the members of Christ's body, in all its properties, all flowing as it doth from one and the same fountain, which is Christ; however different in the greatness or smallness of the stream, it must be, or ought to be, *a faith which worketh by love*, and therefore the consequences would be truly blessed, if they were thus sought for. And it is very blessed both to minister and people, when the *one* is refreshed under the Lord from the labors of his servant, and the *other* is comforted in his own, and their establishment in grace by the Word. *Paul* felt the sweetness of this, and so must all faithful ministers also, when they can adopt *Paul's* language; he told the *Corinthians*, that they had acknowledged his labors in part, *and we are* (said he) *your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours, in the day of the LORD JESUS*, 2 Corinthians 1:11-14.

ROMANS 1:13-17

Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. (14) I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. (15) So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. (16) For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (17) For therein is the righteousness of

God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written. The just shall live by faith.

I would pass over in the review of those verses all that *Paul* speaks of himself, (very interesting as it is to behold this great champion of his Master's cause,) with only one short observation, namely, the ground upon which the Apostle rests, when declaring he is not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. I beg the Reader particularly to notice this. *Paul* was not ashamed of it, because he knew it in its saving power. And let my Reader not be offended when I say, that this personal knowledge can be the only security and preservative against shame. Any man, and every man, will want confidence to profess the Gospel of Christ, whether preacher or hearer, in all its purity, fulness, and glory, unless he himself hath in his own heart known it to be what *Paul* saith it is, *the power of GOD unto salvation, to every one that believeth*. There is indeed what is called the Gospel, and which brings no shame among men, either in those that preach it, or those who hear it, and which is in such a spirit of accommodation to the world, that it is even become fashionable in the present day to attend it: I mean, Where the great leading truths of the Gospel are thrown into the back ground, and a system of ethics supply the place. But, Reader! depend upon it, the shame *Paul* here speaks of, that he shrunk not from, is as much known now where Christ is fully and faithfully preached as it was in *Paul's* days. *The offence of the cross is not ceased*. The Lord forbid it ever should! It is the true standard of a real believer. And where the grand truths of the Gospel are held forth, and insisted upon as the whole counsel of GOD, the man who preacheth, or he that heareth these glorious doctrines, and rejoiceth in their infinite

importance, must have received the same convictions as *Paul* had, or neither of them can adopt his language. Oh! the blessedness of knowing, by the saving work of GOD the HOLY GHOST upon the heart, that *it is the power of GOD unto salvation to every one that believeth!*

I cannot but beg the Reader's notice to what the Apostle saith concerning the righteousness of GOD; that it is *revealed from faith to faith*. That the righteousness here spoken of, is the righteousness of GOD our Savior, is too plain to need further proof, than from what follows when it is added, *the just shall live by faith*, Jeremiah 23:6; Daniel 9:24. See Romans 3:21-22. And there can be no righteousness a man can live upon by faith, but this righteousness. Moreover, the just here named can mean no other than the justified soul in Christ, Romans 3:24. But the revelation of this righteousness of GOD, *from faith to faith*, is not so easy to be understood, and hath been not a little perplexing to many. *Some* have supposed, that it means a revelation from the Old Testament faith to the New. Others have conceived, that the righteousness of GOD, being revealed, begets faith. And a *third class*, differing from both the former, and with more appearance of probability, have concluded, that it means *from* the first revelation of GOD's method of justifying a sinner, *to* all the after acts of faith in the enjoyment of it. But if I may venture to give my views of the passage, I should say, that it appears to me to be simply no other than to state, that this righteousness of GOD, revealed from faith to faith, is revealed *to* faith by way of shewing that it is not obtained *by* faith. The whole and sole cause of justification is Christ. *Faith is* no more than the hand to receive it by. And faith doth not give the least title to it.

Nay, so far from that, faith is produced by the complete work of Christ's righteousness. So that as faith hath no hand in the work, neither hath faith any merit in the performance. It is not revealed from works to faith: but from faith to faith. And as Christ is the great object of faith, so all the life and actions of faith are solely upon his person, blood, and righteousness.

ROMANS 1:18-32

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; (19) Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed *it* unto them. (20) For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and GODHEAD; so that they are without excuse: (21) Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (22) Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, (23) And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. (24) Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: (25) Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (26) For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: (27) And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. (28) And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; (29) Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, (30) Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, (31) Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural

affection, implacable, unmerciful: (32) Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

I must beg the Reader to spare me from entering into any further account than what is here given of the awful state of human nature by the fall. While I admire the chastity of language in the sacred .writers, upon every occasion of this sort, when called upon to sketch the horrid features of man's portrait, since the apostacy of Adam, in which all his posterity are equally drawn, I behold enough in the picture to be humbled to the dust before GOD, and desire to gather from the whole, without enlarging on the several parts of the representation, yet fuller views of the infinite preciousness of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, by whose vast redemption alone, his Church is brought up from such an awful state of depravity. Here, Reader! if we look at what the Apostle hath drawn, and stand convinced under divine teaching, that what one *of Adam's* fallen sinful race hath done, all are equally capable of, and, but for the restraints of grace, would fall into; thus beheld, humbling as the view is, yet blessedly profitable will it become. And, oh! that the Lord may in this manner sanctify the Apostle's account here given to the souls of his people!

REFLECTIONS

Reader! let you and I both pause at the entrance on this blessed Epistle, and while we adore GOD the HOLY GHOST for so precious a gift to his Church, let us beg of Him to give us an understanding and believing heart, in the right apprehension of all its sacred contents. And here, in the very opening, let us look up and behold the LORD JESUS CHRIST in

our nature, in all the glories of his person, and offices, and character. He was, he is declared to be, the Son of GOD, with power. His divine nature fully proved by his quickening SPIRIT, and his human nature by his death and resurrection, and both confirming his suitability to be *the Head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of Him which filleth all in all!*

And, oh! what preciousness is hereby discovered of the Gospel of Christ! How blessedly adapted for the delivery of our poor nature from the ruins of the fall! How graciously contrived for the everlasting happiness of the Church! Reader! behold the holy joy of *Paul*, in his readiness to preach it to all that were in *Rome*, yea, all the world, among *the beloved of GOD, and called to be saints. I am not ashamed* (said Paul,) *of the Gospel of Christ!* Ashamed? Who is, who can be ashamed at that which is the highest glory of our nature? The Son of GOD in our nature proclaiming mercy, pardon, and peace, in the blood of his cross. But, Reader! see to it, that we shrink not from the same standard, and the same cause; when we can say, and appeal as he did, *GOD Is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of his Son!* Lord! grant that thy people, in the awful view of what thy servant hath here shewn of a fallen state, may be led to contemplate the blessed deliverance wrought out for the Church by the LORD JESUS CHRIST, And, oh! for grace to enter into an heartfelt enjoyment of these unspeakable mercies, that while the righteousness of GOD therein is revealed from faith to faith, all truly justified believers may live by faith!

CHAPTER 2

CONTENTS

The Apostle having shewn in the foregoing Chapter, the sad State of all Men by Nature, he shews with equal Proofs arising from human Depravity, the total Inability of the Law to bring Sinners to GOD: and from hence, as in the former Instance, manifests the Necessity and Importance of the Gospel, of Christ.

ROMANS 2:1-11

Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. (2) But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. (3) And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? (4) Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? (5) But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; (6) Who will render to every man according to his deeds: (7) To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life: (8) But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, (9) Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; (10) But glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: (11) For there is no respect of persons with God.

Within the compass of those verses the Apostle enumerates very-many things, which are, and must be confessedly plain and universally received truths, not only founded in revelation, but common sense and reason. But on these we need not dwell. *Paul's* evident intention in the introduction, of

them, is only in a way preparatory, to shew the inability of the Law of *Moses* to justify sinners before God. The great design of this Chapter is to set this forth in the fullest colors, and, in the example of the Jew, to manifest that the law never did, neither was it ever designed, to bring sinners to God. And therefore he begins with stating common principles of right and wrong. All judgment proceeds upon this standard of equity. The Jews had a law. They brake it. And yet, while breaking it themselves, they condemned others who brake it also. Now, saith the Apostle, is it possible for you to suppose, that a law which you have broken can justify you? Can you think that a broken law can be your justification before God? Are you so senseless as to plead what becomes your very condemnation?

Such views of the subject contained in those verses, will serve to explain the several expressions made use of in the Apostle's reasoning. *The goodness of GOD leadeth thee to repentance.* What repentance? Not that repentance which CHRIST *is exalted as a prince and a Savior to give,* Acts 5:31. GOD's gift cannot be man's merit. But the repentance here alluded to, is that *natural* sorrow which conscience will still excite in the heart, notwithstanding its present benumbed state, and as we see it doth in the worst of men, when their sins bring sorrow, and their crimes are followed by punishment. The vilest sinner alive is led to this *natural* repentance when judgment taketh hold of him. But this sorrow differs wholly from godly sorrow and true repentance, wrought in the heart by sovereign grace.

This *natural* sorrow is wholly of man, the other is wholly of GOD. *Natural* repentance is excited by the dread of affliction:

gracious repentance is awakened by the HOLY GHOST, when convincing of sin. And while that of nature only acts as long as a fear of punishment hangs over the conscience, and the heart remains the same as it was before: that of grace brings with it a thorough change, and the life is reformed. The Apostle himself so describes it. *Godly sorrow* (said he) *worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death*, 2 Corinthians 6:10.

In like manner, when it is said in those verses, that *the Lord will render to every man according to his works, and that there is no respect of persons with GOD*: those expressions must not be accepted contrary to the general tenor of holy scripture, GOD hath no respect of persons, considered as to their own personal worth or doings. He hath no respect of persons, as to their place of birth, or relations from whom they are descended in the *Adam*-nature of generation, where the whole stock is from the original apostacy, all alike corrupt. Neither hath the Lord respect of persons, as some have ventured to suppose from foreseeing what should arise in them, or be done by them, in the after circumstances of their life. *For all the good that is done upon earth, the Lord doeth it himself* Upon all these accounts, nothing can be more plain and evident than that GOD is no respecter of persons. There is, there can be nothing in the creature in a way of merit, which can act as a cause in the sight of the Lord to induce this respect. But it is equally certain, that while GOD respects no man's person, on either of the grounds here mentioned, yet the whole Church, and every individual of that Church, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, the Lord hath had respect to, on Christ's account, and highly

distinguished every one of their persons, as they are one with Christ, and hath accepted and beloved them in Him. And to the same amount, and on the same ground, the reward that the Lord is here said *to render to every man according to his deeds*; the sense is, not that the merit of every man, considered in himself, and without an eye to Christ, will form the standard of retribution. For, alas! if this were the case, everlasting condemnation must alike fall on all, for *all the world*; in the Adam-nature of an unregenerated, unrenewed state, *become guilty before GOD*, Romans 3:19. But the meaning is, (and indeed the verses which follow explain it,) as men are accepted in Christ, or as they reject Christ in their own souls. *They* (saith the Apostle) *who seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life*; that is, they seek those things in Christ. Indeed, no where else can they be found. Christ himself is eternal life. And they who have Christ, have eternal life in Him, and all the blessings connected with it, John 17:2; 1 John 5:11-12; John 3:36. But to them *that are contentious*, that is, contend against Christ as the whole of salvation, and stand upon the bottom of their own works, either in whole or in part, *there will be indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil*. Hence this scripture is in this way very fully established. *The Lord will render to every man according to his deeds*. Here are the deeds of faith, and the deeds of works. And the issue is as might be expected. Reader! ponder well the subject. Think what a mercy it must be in that final day of account, which *Paul* calls, *the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of GOD*, to have a perfect, compleat, and all-sufficient righteousness to stand in, for the justification of our persons before GOD. Thai can only be

found in the person of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. And if it be blessed *then*, so must it be *now*. Have you ever made it the subject of examination? Will you try it in the present moment? Put your hand upon your heart. Judge it yourself with a strict scrutiny, as it will be done in the hour when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. And as a discovery of its workings will bring up proofs of its deceitfulness, Jeremiah 17:9, listen to what the HOLY GHOST speaks of Christ's all-sufficiency, in the blood of the everlasting covenant. And if the Lord the SPIRIT shews you, that there is more in JESUS to save, than in sin to condemn, sweet will be the consolation that will follow. And depend upon it, if the Lord speaks peace *now*, he will not speak condemnation *then*. *He is of one mind, and who can turn him?* Job 23:13. GOD will not unsay what he hath once said. *Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom,* Job 33:24.

ROMANS 2:12-16

For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (13) (For not the hearers of the law *are* just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. (14) For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: (15) Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) (16) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

Here the Apostle enters upon the subject, which is the great design he had in view in this whole chapter. His object is to prove, that the *Jew* had no more advantage by the law, in a way of justification, than (as he had before shewn in the

preceding chapter,) the *Gentile* had by the light of nature. Both were included under sin. Having introduced the subject by the preparatory verses, he here enters upon it in the consideration of the law.

And, first, he considers sinners in the *Adam-nature* of a fallen state, as sinning, and perishing without law, as a positive and decided proof, that all who sin under the law must be judged, and will consequently fall under the just sentence by that law. And then, in a parenthesis which takes up three verses, the Apostle draws the line of equity to prove the justness of this decision, as it relates both to Jew and Gentile; the one by the law of conscience, and the other by the law of the covenant given to Israel on *Mount Sinai*.

Some men, (indeed most men,) who have written, or commented upon the subject, have dwelt much upon the law of *Moses*, as divided into two parts; and have called it, *Ceremonial* and *Moral*. But this distinction certainly is not scriptural; for there is not such a word *in* the whole Bible, as *Moral*. The Law indeed, is, made up of precepts and ordinances; but then, both point to Christ, and both are fulfilled in Christ. And the law had no other tendency, than to act as a school-master to Christ, See Galatians 3:24 and Commentary. And, as Christ is said by the HOLY GHOST, to be *the end of the law, for righteousness to every One that believeth*; Romans 10:4, in Him, both the accomplishment of the ordinances, and the fulfillment of the precepts, are alike found.

That the law, in all its bearings had this direction, and was intended for no other purpose, is evident, from the spirituality

of its nature. Its chief object was to shew the necessity of a purity within; not of mere ceremonies without. And the law insisted upon an holiness of the thoughts, as well as of the actions. And, therefore, this one view alone is enough to manifest, that none of the *Adam*-nature stock could come up to it. Indeed it was never expected. For, the Apostle elsewhere saith, in answer to the important question; *wherefore then serveth the law? It was added, (saith he,) because of transgressions,* Galatians 3:19. As if he had said, it was given, to set forth the spirituality of God's holy law; and the total impossibility of any one of the sons of *Adam*, by nature, fulfilling it. And what was all this, but Preaching Christ, in all his fulness and glory, as the Law-fulfiller, in the character and capacity of the Surety of his people? Hebrews 7:22.

ROMANS 2:17-29

Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, (18) And knowest *his* will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; (19) And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, (20) An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. (21) Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? (22) Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? (23) Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest thou God? (24) For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. (25) For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. (26) Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? (27) And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfill the law, judge thee,

who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? (28) For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: (29) But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

The Apostle having thus, in a *general* way, very fully established the main point he had in view, in proving the impossibility of justification before GOD, either by the law of nature, or by the law given by *Moses*; now proceeds to make a *particular* address to the people, he all along had in contemplation, and calls upon the Jew, to form his own judgment. There is a very great beauty, both in the argument itself he makes use of, and in the manner of his using it; which cannot fail, under the Lord, to have a sensible effect on every mind taught of GOD.

The Apostle first grants every thing that could be desired, in respect to the privileges and advantages of the Jews, above all nations of the earth. They had, as *Paul* elsewhere tells the Church, those great things done for them, which no people under heaven but themselves possessed. *To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants) and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises: Whose were the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came; who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen, Romans 9:4-5.* A nation so distinguished, so marked with divine favors, might well be expected to have been distinguished also in every thing which should have marked a corresponding conduct. And ages before *Paul*, their great law-giver *Moses*, had both shewn them their advantages, and what should have followed. See Deuteronomy 4:5-9. But their

history, furnished a woeful account of the reverse of all right conduct. And, from that period to the days of *Paul*, nothing, more or less, but daring rebellion, uniformly filled in the pages of their national character. The Apostle briefly takes notice of their advantages as a people; and makes this the foundation of his appeal therefrom. *Behold!* (saith he,) *thou art called a Jew, and resteth in the law, and makest thy boast of GOD.* And the Apostle goeth on, to fall in with all of what the children of Abraham, after the flesh, boasted of, in order the more strikingly to prove his grand point, in their self-condemnation.

Paul next proceeds to charge upon the Jews the total neglect of all the precepts enjoined them. And he doth it in a way of question, which, as it waits not for an answer, (because in fact it needed none, being self-evident, and unanswerable,) becomes a more decided method, than so many positive assertions. And the Apostle having fully shewn, that the Jews, while priding themselves upon their laws, were defective in the observance of every one of them: while pretending to instruct the ignorant, were themselves wholly ignorant, and in the blindness of unregeneracy; while apparently approving the things that were more excellent, were acting in direct contradiction to them; he draws a conclusion, that in an instance so palpable, nothing could be more glaring, than that the *Jew* stood on the same footing with the *Gentile*, and both became alike guilty before GOD. Yea, *Paul* closeth this part of his charge with intimating, that from the greater inattention which the *Jew* observed to the law, as a rule of life, to what the unenlightened *Heathen* in many instances had followed, in the law of nature; the deficiency of the one, was less

pardonable than the *other*: and the worse effects in the world in consequence took place. *For the name of God (saith Paul) is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you,* Isaiah 52:5.

The *third* step the Apostle advances in, throws to the ground all that the Jew could lay hold of, in his vain pretensions to the divine favor, in shewing, that the rite of circumcision, in its highest extent, was simply nothing more than an *outward* sign of an *inward* effect. It consisted, not in any thing carnal, but spiritual. Not in a mere mark in the flesh, but the impression of grace in the heart. In short, it pointed to Christ, being a seal of the covenant, and Christ himself the Covenant! And therefore, nothing could be argued in point of privileges, from circumcision; because in fact those privileges were all in Christ, to whom that rite referred. And consequently, a carnal Jew had not the smallest claim in the privileges of a spiritual Christian. Hence, from this plain and undeniable statement, the Apostle fairly, and fully concludes, that the *Jew*, no more than the *Gentile*, could find justification by the deeds of the law, before GOD. Reader! do not fail to remark, with what unanswerable force of argument the Apostle follows up the great and important doctrine, which he had entered upon, in the preceding Chapter; and to what a sure, however humiliating conclusion, he hath already advanced, when by such a clear train of evidences, the truth is fully seen; that the whole world, both Jew and Gentile, are manifestly proved guilty before GOD, Romans 3:19.

REFLECTIONS

Reader! let us, in the view of Israel, and the privileges of Israel, and the sad abuse of them by Israel; feel suitably

affected with the sense of our mercies. Is it possible to behold that nation, to mark *the* Lord's watchful eye over them as a nation; and now to call to mind their dispersion and misery, as a nation; and have no concern for ourselves, as a people ?

Let us moreover solemnly deliberate, as fully shewn in their history, how incompetent both law and ordinances are, to bring the heart to God. Yea, let us in them learn, how sure it is, that where privileges do not lead to good, men pervert them into evil. Outward means, unaccompanied with an inward grace, are among the most fatal deceptions of the present day. And, beyond all doubt, whatever becomes not *the savor of life unto life*; will have *the savor of death unto death!*

Precious LORD JESUS! how sweet is it, when our souls can seek unto thee for relief and comfort, under all our discouragements! Thou art indeed the life, and light; and the sole righteousness of thy people, Oh! grant, that from being stripped of every thing the pride of unhumbl'd nature might be prompted to take up with after the *Gentile*, and the presumption of any supposed righteousness in the law after the *Jew*; thy redeemed may come under the teaching of thy blessed SPIRIT; and wholly seeking in JESUS, and from JESUS, glory, honor, and immortality, may have eternal life; and with full assurance of faith, *believe the record that God hath given of his Son.*

CHAPTER 3

CONTENTS

The Apostle is here further prosecuting the Subject respecting the Jews. He proves the full Condemnation of all the World before GOD by the Deeds of the Law, In the close, he sweetly preacheth CHRIST.

ROMANS 3:1-4

What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there* of circumcision? (2) Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. (3) For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? (4) God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

We cannot sufficiently admire, the very delightful method, the Apostle was led to adopt, in this Chapter, while prosecuting his subject. He puts a question into the mouth of the Church, which he foresaw would arise in the minds of the people, from what he had said, and as instantly answers it. Concluding, that from the leveling principle he had made, of hewing down at one stroke both *Jew* and *Gentile*, as alike unable to justify themselves before GOD, it would stagger the faith of many, who had before conceived, as the Jews all along had done, high notions of their privileges; he demands, to what good the whole of the dispensation by the Jew had tended? *What advantage then* (saith he) *hath the Jew; or what profit is there of Circumcision?* As if he had said, If your statement be correct, that the *Jew* is as far from salvation by the law, as the *Gentile* is by nature; to what purpose was it to be born of the natural stock of *Abraham*, or what use was it for all his children to be circumcised?

The answer to those interesting questions, which the Apostle immediately follows up, in a most ample and satisfactory manner, gives occasion to set forth, in yet stronger features of character, the object he had all along in view, of the utterly lost and helpless estate of every man before GOD, in any thing of his own. And the great drift from the whole is, to prove the absolute need of Christ; and the compleatness in Christ, in a way of a full, free, and finished justification.

Paul having therefore started the question in the first verse, opens at once in the *second*, to give answer. And he begins with setting forth, the vast advantage the *Jew* had over the *Gentile*, notwithstanding the mercies themselves had, by their abuse of them, been much perverted. And while he observes, that their privileges were every way great, he mentions one, which indeed, more or less, comprehended in its bosom every other; namely, in having the Oracles of his holy Word, which so blessedly set forth, in type and shadow, as well as by absolute promise and prophecy, the coming of the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

I beg the Reader to pause in this place. And, I would ask him, whether it doth not strike him, that over and above these things, among the many blessed designs in GOD the HOLY GHOST, when committing the sacred Oracles to the Jewish nation, which contain such abundant proofs and testimonies, of all the leading doctrines of our most holy faith; that this also was a very principal one: namely, to confirm to all the after ages of the Church, *the truth as it is in JESUS*. Who, that reads the Scriptures of the Old Testament with an enlightened eye, but must see the doctrine of the Holy Three in One, which bear record in Heaven, shining with full lustre in every

Book? Who that hears the Prophets, predicting the coming of the *Messiah*, but must be struck with their witness to the GODHEAD of Christ? All, with one voice, bearing testimony to one and the same fundamental truth; *behold your GOD will come and save you! then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped!*, Isaiah 35:4-5; Luke 4:16-21. And who that reads so much of the out-pouring of the SPIRIT in the latter day dispensation, upon all flesh; can hesitate to conclude, but that the leading design for which such grace was foretold, was that the minds of the people in the Church of GOD, might be led to discover, under his Almighty teaching, sweet features of the Person, GODHEAD, and Ministry, of the Eternal SPIRIT?, Joel 2:28, with Acts 2:17; 1 Corinthians 12 throughout.

The Reader may, if he please, accept the foregoing paragraph as if written within a parenthesis. I could not suppress the thought, which involuntarily arose in my mind, from the view, of the sacred Oracles having been all along deposited with *Israel*, for this among other purposes. And, I hope it may be found useful. With such as call in question those fundamental truths of our holy faith, I cannot suppose it will be interesting. But *the Poor Man's Commentary* is designed for a very different class, James 2:5. And, all of a contrary complexion, are invulnerable to conviction, untaught by the SPIRIT; neither can they be persuaded, *though one rose from the dead!*, Luke 16:31.

The Apostle very properly argues, that the unbelief of *Israel*, could not do away GOD's promises, which were not conditional, for those promises depended not upon the merit of man, but the faithfulness of GOD. And the instance of *David*

is as gracious as it is striking, by way of confirmation. GOD's promise to *David*, was an absolute unconditional promise, that of *the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne*, Psalm 132:11; Acts 2:30. But shall *David's* sin, in the case of *Bathsheba*, do away this promise? GOD forbid. *Yea, let GOD be true, and every man a liar*. The Lord must be justified in his sayings. His word must stand. And, if presumptuous men will dare to impeach, either the Lord's word, or his wisdom, in any of his dispensations; he will be found justified and holy in all. Reader! do not overlook by the way the blessedness of this doctrine, as it may be, and as it ought to be, applied, to numberless occasions in life.

ROMANS 3:5-8

But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? *Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?* I (speak as a man) (6) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? (7) For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? (8) And not *rather*, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.

The Apostle foresaw, how ready the carnal, and ungodly, would be, to take offence at this statement; as if the doctrine led to licentiousness. And moreover, the infidel would go further, and charge GOD with unrighteousness, while punishing for sin, in one instance, while in another, taking occasion from sin, to magnify and display the riches of his grace. But, the Apostle refutes the unjust charge; and, by the plainest statement shews, that it is but just in GOD to commend his righteousness in pardoning his people, because, in the Person of their glorious Head, he hath received a full

equivalent for their transgression. While, on the other hand, GOD is not unrighteous, when he takes vengeance on the ungodly, who despise redemption by Christ; for they stand upon the bottom of self-security, and consequently fall in the day of judgment. And, ill respect to the false and malicious slander, thrown upon the Lord's people, as if they should assert what they totally deny, that they may live as they like; this charge is not so directly leveled at the Lord's people, as it is at the Lord himself. It ariseth from the deadly hatred of the Devil, against Christ, and his people. And therefore, he stirs up the minds of carnal men, to be indignant against the sovereignty of Jehovah, and against the glorious doctrine of justification wholly by Christ. It is these precious truths, which are arraigned at man's bar. It is these things, which excite, both the bitterest hatred of *Satan*, and unawakened sinners, But, to raise the hue and cry against the Lord himself for his dispensations, would be too open and barefaced; and therefore, the charge is brought forward against the Lord's people, as if their doctrines led to licentiousness. Reader! You cannot be a stranger to these things, if you observe what is going on in the present day, among what is called the religious world; for it is precisely the same as it was in the days of the Apostle. Indeed it is a blessed proof, and ought to be regarded as such by the faithful, that the Apostle's faith and practice were the same then, as the faith and practice of the present hour, among the true followers of Christ, since they are subject to the same calumny. We know, and our opposers know, that they who from right principles, profess faith in the sole justification by Christ, cannot lead lives unsuitable to this precious doctrine. The thing is impossible. For they art regenerated by GOD the HOLY GHOST, live thereby

in union with Christ, and are followers of GOD the Father, as dear children. Hence, they may, and they do, challenge the whole neighborhood where they dwell, whether they are not *examples of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*, 1 Timothy 4:12. That beautiful Portrait *Paul* hath drawn in his Epistle to the *Philippians*, is the character which every child of GOD seeks for grace to copy after, and to form his life by. *Finally, Brethren, (said he,) whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things*, *Philippians* 4:8.

ROMANS 3:5-20

But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? *Is* God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? I (speak as a man) (6) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? (7) For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? (8) And not *rather*, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just. (9) What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; (10) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: (11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. (13) Their throat *is* an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips: (14) Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness: (15) Their feet *are* swift to shed blood: (16) Destruction and misery *are* in their ways: (17) And the way of peace have they not known: (18) There is no fear of God before their eyes. (19) Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become

guilty before God. (20) Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

The Apostle having very fully answered every objection, and shewn, by the plainest and most incontrovertible arguments, that neither Jew nor Gentile could justify themselves before GOD, both, being in the *Adam*-state of nature, of original sin, and actual transgression ; he now calls upon the Church, to consider their situation, under the Gospel dispensation, and demands whether they thought themselves, as to any external privileges, brought into a better state, so as to be able to contribute any thing towards their own justification before GOD? To which *Paul* answers, both for himself and them, in declaring the contrary. And, as he had before shewn, that both Jew, and Gentile, were proved to be sinners; so the Church, considered in the *Adam*-nature of a fallen state, were equally so before GOD, And, in confirmation of this, the Apostle quotes at large, what the Scriptures had long before delivered, on this momentous point, which brought in the whole world guilty before GOD. I earnestly beg the Reader to pause over this subject, and consider its weighty nature. However humbling, yet it is important to be known. For, in proportion to the conviction of it on the mind, so will be, more or less, our real regard to the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and his salvation. For the words at the end of this paragraph, *by the law is the knowledge of sin*: See Romans 7:7 and Commentary.

ROMANS 3:21-26

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; (22) Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and

upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: (23) For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (24) Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in CHRIST JESUS: (25) Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (26) To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Here *Paul* arrives at the great object, which all along he had been preparing to bring in; and in the very mention of which, his whole soul seems to be on fire, Jeremiah 20:9. He had glanced at it before, Romans 1:17. But here he dwells on it more particularly. And, what he marks as the distinguishing feature of it, is, that it is wholly unconnected with any other, and with every other, principle. *But now*, (saith he,) *the righteousness of GOD without the law is manifested*; yea, saith *Paul*, it is *witnessed by the law and the prophets*. Both, joyfully give in their testimony, to the complete, full, and all justifying *righteousness of GOD, which is by faith of JESUS CHRIST*. They gladly minister to proclaim their own nothingness, and Christ's all-sufficiency, in a way of justification. Reader! I beseech you, pause over this precious testimony, which GOD the HOLY GHOST hath here given, by his servant *Paul*, to the righteousness of GOD our Savior. Look at the law in all its bearings. *By the law*, saith *Paul*, *is the knowledge of sin*. Yes! the law teacheth of sin, shews what sin is; but cannot shew a righteousness which may save from it. This the Gospel only proclaims. And the blessedness of it, and the fulness of it, and the completeness of it, both the law and the Prophets witness to with joy! Daniel 9:24; Romans 4-25.

But, what I beg the Reader also not to overlook, in this precious statement, of the righteousness of GOD our Savior, is, that it is a righteousness so universally suited to the Lord's people, in every department, whether babes in Christ, or old saints of GOD, that it is unto all, and upon all, that believe, for there is no difference. Reader! calculate, if you can, the immense blessedness of what is here said. *First*, of the righteousness itself, which is wholly of GOD. Not of man's providing, but of GOD's appointing. Not of man's merit, but of GOD's free grace. No predisposing cause but the everlasting love of GOD in Christ, having any thing to do in the matter. Yea, faith itself, by which a child of GOD is made to possess it, and enjoy it, hath nothing of merit by way of recommendation. The Lord, who is the sole Author and Giver of this righteousness, is the sole Author and Giver of faith also to receive, believe, and enjoy it, So that faith, as an act of ours, is but the effect, and not the cause; the hand to receive, and not to promote, the vast mercy. The highly favored soul, who is made a rich partaker of the blessing; to him it is given, to feel his want of righteousness in himself, to behold Christ's righteousness as every way suited to himself and his wants, to accept on his bended knees the proffered mercy, and to receive it to the divine glory, and his own happiness.

Secondly. This righteousness, is said to be, *unto all, and upon all, that believe, for there is no difference*. No difference in the thing itself, neither in the application of it. For the Lord, whose it is, gives it to all with an equal hand, and loves all with an equal love, and justifies all with an equal freeness of grace. For, it is not what they are in themselves, but what they are in Christ, which makes them the objects of the divine

favor. It is blessed, yea, very blessed, to have a large hand of faith to receive the larger portions of the grace of belief, to enjoy the Lord's blessings of every kind, with a greater fulness. But our enjoyment is one thing, and the Lord's righteousness, which justifies, another. He that hath little faith, and is in Christ, is as compleatly justified by Christ, as he that hath the largest portions of faith to apprehend with greater delight his mercies. *By him*, (saith the Apostle, that is, by Christ,) *all that believe*, whether strong believers or weak ones, whether babes in Christ, or fathers in the strength of Christ; *are justified from all things*, Acts 23:39. And the reason is given. For the righteousness which justifies, is alike justifying, too *all, and upon all*. It is unto them, and upon them; not *within* them, nor *from* them. And therefore, being wholly out of themselves, and nothing within, no inherent holiness in the creature, which some men talk of, but none know; there can be no difference in the receiver, or in the act of justification by the Giver. For, as the Apostle adds in the following verses: *All have sinned, and come short of the glory of GOD*. And, therefore, the justification of all, cannot but be alike the free gift of GOD, and not the smallest difference in man. *Being justified* (saith the Apostle) *freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in CHRIST JESUS*.

In the close of this paragraph, the Apostle dwells very blessedly on the greatness of Christ's sacrifice; and on the grace of GOD, in the wonderful ordination of it: and, from the union of both he shews, how Jehovah, in his threefold character of Persons, may, and indeed doth, justify the believer in JESUS, while preserving his own glory, in the full perfection of all the rights of his justice. *Whom GOD* (saith he)

hath set forth a propitiation through faith in his blood. The Reader will perceive, that I take no notice in this passage of those words, *to be*, which are in Italicks, and which have no business there; for Christ was not then to be set forth; for this had been done from everlasting. *The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting,* Proverbs 8:22-23. And, Christ is said to have been, *the lamb slain from the foundation of the world!*, Revelation 13:8. And Christ hath been, and is, and will be, the same, in the perpetual, and unceasing efficacy of his blood, to all eternity.

We do not meet with this word *propitiation*, but three times in all the Bible, once in this place and twice in the First Epistle of John, 1 John 2:2 and 1 John 4:10. Christ indeed is both the propitiation and the propitiatory. He is the propitiation, or sacrifice; the propitiatory, or mercy seat and altar, on which that sacrifice was offered; and he is the high priest, or sacrificer, to make the offering. The Jews were accustomed, on this account, to call the mercy-seat *Ilasterion*. For here, in allusion to all the great events connected with the Person of Christ, and his Offices, and Character; the Lord promised to come and meet his people, Exodus 25:22. And, in the Person of Christ only, can this meeting be, either in time, or eternity. Well might his Name be called WONDERFUL! For, while all the divine Attributes meet in his Person, and shine in one full constellation; all our sins *meet on him*, (so it is rendered in the margin of our old Bibles, Isaiah 53:6) as centering *upon* Christ, not *in* Christ; and the LORD JESUS washing them all away by his blood. So that Christ, in the fullest sense of the word, is the propitiation, and the only propitiation for sin;

having by that one offering of himself once offered, *perfected for ever them that are sanctified*, Hebrews 10:14.

ROMANS 3:27-31

Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. (28) Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. (29) *Is he* the God of the Jews only? *is he* not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: (30) Seeing *it is* one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. (31) Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

The Apostle having shewn, and by means so clear and plain, the way of salvation to be only in CHRIST, and by CHRIST; now returns back to his original subject, in relation to the total inability of either Jew, or Gentile, justifying themselves before GOD. And, to do this with greater, force of argument, he puts every objection which the weakness, or perversity of the human mind, untaught of GOD, might bring into the form of questions. *Where is boasting then? It is excluded By what law of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.* Everything is excluded in the creature, while CHRIST alone is exalted in the infinite greatness, and glories of his Person, and in the infinite merit of his work, in his blood shedding, and righteousness. The, *Jew* and *Gentile* are distinctions but in name, while CHRIST is all, and in all. For GOD, as a Covenant GOD in CHRIST, is the GOD of both, in every individual instance of his Church, given by GOD to CHRIST, and chosen by GOD in CHRIST, before the foundation of the world, Ephesians. 1:4. This ancient settlement of eternity took place, not only before the name of Jew or Gentile were known, but before sin had entered into the world to make those distinctions; yea, before the world itself was called into being. And therefore, as the

Church of CHRIST had being in CHRIST, from everlasting; the recovery of the Church from the *Adam-fall* by sin, in this time-state of her being, had been all along provided for: and CHRIST'S people, whether Jew or Gentile, were his, and the objects of his love, and grace, and favor, from all eternity. So that He that is the GOD in Covenant for the Jew, is also for the Gentile; seeing it is His justification of them, whether circumcised or uncircumcised, and not their different claims to favor, which becomes the cause of their acceptance. And so far is all this blessed and approved way, of being wholly justified by CHRIST, from setting aside the law, that in fact it becomes the only establishment of it. Since it proves, that rather than one jot or tittle of GOD'S holy law should fail; the SON of GOD shall fulfil all its righteous demands, and give his soul an offering for sin, for the breaches of it by his people. And, it is the joy of all the redeemed, as well in heaven, as earth, that by the obedience and death of CHRIST, the SON of GOD in our nature, hath done more to magnify, and make honorable, GOD'S holy law, than could have been done by the unsinning obedience of the whole creation of (GOD, to all eternity, Daniel 9:24.

REFLECTIONS

READER! behold the awful state by nature, both of Jew and Gentile! See, what a portrait to humble our souls to the dust, the LORD the SPIRIT hath twice drawn, in his sacred pages; once by *David*, and here by *Paul*, of our utterly lost, and ruined estate, by nature and by practice; as we stand in ourselves before GOD. And this we are told, was the result of that enquiry, when the LORD looked down from heaven, to see

if there were any that would seek after God. *All were gone out of the way. All together become unprofitable. None good, no, not one.* And how then could it be otherwise, than while beheld in our *Adam-nature*, and without being considered in CHRIST, *all the world must become guilty before GOD?*

And, can it need any argument of persuasion, to prompt the heart convinced of this, to look to JESUS; yea, to flee to Him, from the wrath to come? Am I, are you, convinced of these most unquestionable truths, and do we pause, or remain stupid, and senseless, in the view of these vast concerns? Hath GOD set forth his dear SON, as propitiation through faith in his blood; and do we hesitate in the acceptance of it? Is it declared from heaven, that by the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified in GOD's sight; and are we looking to that quarter, either in whole, or in part, for favor with the LORD? Oh! Sir! if at that awful tribunal, when GOD cometh to judge the world in righteousness, and minister true judgment unto the people, we are found without the righteousness of JESUS, and his propitiation, to be our security; what paleness, what horror, will mark the countenance of every son and daughter of *Adam*? Precious LORD JESUS! be thou my propitiation, my high Priest, my Altar, the LORD my righteousness *now*: and sure I am thou wilt be my everlasting glory *then*. When law, and justice, in the multitude of breaches I have committed against both, would give in their verdict against me: *Thou shalt answer for me, O LORD my GOD!* Oh! the preciousness of that voice now heard by the ear of faith, and then confirmed with the unalterable determination from the throne: *deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom!*

CHAPTER 4

CONTENTS

The Apostle is prosecuting the same Subject through this Chapter. He brings forward the Patriarch Abraham's Faith, in Proof that there can be no Justification before GOD, by the Deeds of the Law.

ROMANS 4:1-5

What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? (2) For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God. (3) For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. (4) Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. (5) But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

The Apostle begins this Chapter, at the place he left off in the preceding. Foreseeing that difficulties might be started by some, from what he had advanced, that by the deeds of the law no flesh could be justified in GOD'S sight; all the world being found guilty before him: he adopts an admirable method, to confirm the doctrine, in taking the most unexceptionable character the Scriptures of the Old Testament could furnish, and in the instance of *Abraham* he shews, that this great father of the faithful, considered in himself, had nothing more to recommend him to GOD than the greatest sinner. *Abraham*, when beheld in relation to the *Adam*-nature in which he was born, was equally involved with all mankind in a fallen state, and belonged as much as any to that race, of whom the word of GOD had decidedly declared, that *there is none righteous, no, not one*,

Paul treats this subject in an unanswerable manner, as proved in the case of *Abraham*. He shews, from the Patriarch's history, that when the LORD first called *Abraham*, to make known to him his sovereign grace and Covenant-mercy in CHRIST; *Abraham* at that time was an Idolater, dwelling in *Ur* of the *Chaldees*. Of consequence there could be nothing in the conduct of the Patriarch, which prompted, and called forth the mercy of the LORD. It began, therefore, on the part of GOD; and was altogether free, unmerited, unlooked for, and unsought by *Abraham*. And the simple act, which *Abraham* exercised upon this occasion, at the call of the LORD, was faith in GOD'S word, and promise. If the Reader will compare Genesis 12:1-4 with Hebrews 11:8, this point will appear abundantly plain and evident. And as he prosecutes the Patriarch's history, in the after stages of it, he will next learn, in confirmation of the Apostle's doctrine, what that faith was, which the Patriarch was enabled to exercise; and who was the one great object of it. The LORD called him to *get out of his country, and kindred, and from his father's house*; (all which were shadows of a separation from the *Adam*-nature of a fallen state;) and the LORD promised to make of him a great nation, and that *in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed*: all which referred to the Person, and work of CHRIST.

That these glorious promises wholly referred to CHRIST, and that the Patriarch so viewed them, is evident, from what followed in his history. For thus the HOLY GHOST hath caused it to be recorded. *After these things, the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, fear not Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward*, Genesis 15:50. What

word of the LORD was this? It could not be the *written* word; for at that time, the Scriptures were none of them written. It must have been the Essential, the uncreated WORD, which GOD the HOLY GHOST, in after ages of the Church, spake of by his servant *John*, when revealing the SON of GOD, John 1:1. See also Commentary on that scripture. Reader! pause over the subject, for it is precious. Oh! how delightful it is, thus to discover Him, *whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting*, Micah 5:2. And, how precious are such testimonies to the GODHEAD of the LORD JESUS!

But, let us not stop here. The Almighty WORD, which thus spake in vision to *Abraham*, declared himself to be *Abraham's shield*, and his *exceeding great reward*. And I need not, I hope, tell the Reader, that these are among the titles of CHRIST. Indeed, they can belong to no other. JESUS, and JESUS only, is the hiding place from the wind, and the covert from the tempest, Isaiah 32:2. And, the Church could mean no other, when she said, in her prayers to JEHOVAH: *Behold, O GOD our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. For the LORD GOD is a sun, and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory, Psalm 84:9; Psalm 84:11.* And, the LORD is both *the portion of his people, and their GOD their glory*, Deuteronomy 33:29; Isaiah 60:9. Hence, in every point of view, the WORD, which came unto *Abraham* in a vision, is proved to have been the Essential, Uncreated WORD, in all the properties of GODHEAD: and considered no less in his Mediatorial-character, he *is Emmanuel*, GOD with us, GOD in our nature, manifesting himself in those characters, as the shield, and the exceeding great reward of his people.

And, what forms another distinguishing feature to be attended to in this history of *Abraham* is, the sense which the Patriarch had of his need of these glorious promises; and the consciousness he enjoyed, of his own personal interest in them. We have our LORD's own authority, for this most certain conclusion. For JESUS told the Jews, that their father *Abraham* saw his day afar off, rejoiced, and was glad, John 8:56. A most decided proof, that *Abraham* had clear apprehensions of the Person, and work of CHRIST; and of justification solely by him. So indeed *Paul* told the *Galatian* Church. *The Scripture foreseeing that GOD would justify the heathen through faith; preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying: In thee shall all nations be blessed*, Galatians 3:8. Hence, there can be no question, but that the Patriarch, in this Gospel, learnt all the great doctrines of redemption by CHRIST; and of his own personal right therein. The same Almighty WORD, which taught *Abraham* in a vision, that he was *Abraham's shield*, and exceeding great reward; taught him no less, that the Patriarch needed both: Hence, the LORD said *fear not*; intimating great cause of fear without them, being in himself a sinner before GOD. And, it was this believing view which *Abraham* had in CHRIST, and the great things to be accomplished by CHRIST, which made Abraham's faith so illustrious, and his enjoyment so unbroken. He saw them afar off indeed, but he realized them as near. The promise to him became as sure, as though the whole events included in the promise, had been already accomplished. Hence, he believed GOD. He gave GOD the credit of GOD: and took GOD at his word. The faithfulness of the Almighty Promiser, became security, in his view, for the promise: and, *being strong in faith, he gave glory to GOD; being fully persuaded that what*

GOD *had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.*

We shall find occasion hereafter, towards the close of this beautiful Chapter, to speak more fully to the circumstances of this righteousness, in which *Abraham*, (and every child of God like *Abraham*, of this spiritual seed,) is said to be justified. But in the mean-time, from the view of the subject, as set forth in those verses, we have seen enough to discover, under divine teaching, that the faith of *Abraham*, and the great object of that faith, had respect wholly to CHRIST. *Abraham* was conscious of his fallen state before GOD. He rejoiced in CHRIST'S day, though seen afar off. He knew the whole to be of grace, not of debt. The Covenant transactions, from beginning to end, he was perfectly aware, had no respect to merit, or deservings, in the Patriarch, either in the LORD'S view of *Abraham*, or *Abrahams* view of himself. Hence, the Patriarch was blessed of GOD in this righteousness of CHRIST. *And so then, (saith the Apostle,) they which are of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham, Galatians 3:9*

ROMANS 4:6-8

Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, (7) *Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. (8) Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*

The Apostle in those verses, proceeds to another similar case in point, yet further to illustrate this very important doctrine He brings forward the prophet *David*, as instructing the Church in one of his Psalms, on the same grounds, of justification before GOD, in the righteousness of GOD. And he

states this as a point of great blessedness, where GOD *imputeth righteousness without works*. There are two or three very striking things, in this passage of *David's* Psalm, as quoted and applied by the Apostle, which merit our notice; and I beg the Reader's permission to point them out as they strike me, Psalm 32:1-2.

First. That it is GOD's righteousness, and not man's. For what is imputed from another, cannot in the nature of things be his, to whom it is imputed, until by imputation it is made so. *Secondly.* It being called GOD's righteousness, when it is CHRIST's righteousness, which is the thing imputed, most decidedly proves CHRIST to be GOD. *Thirdly.* It being said to be imputed from GOD without works plainly manifests, that it is GOD's free grace, and not man's merit, for which it is imputed. Nothing in the receiver becoming in the least a predisposing cause; but being wholly by grace from the Giver, from beginning to end. *Fourthly.* The blessedness which is said to follow the possession by faith of this righteousness; decidedly shews, the union with CHRIST, from communion in all the benefits of CHRIST; as the in-dwelling sin of nature proves our being descended from *Adam*, by the effects of sin which follow in the same acts of *Adam's* transgression. As, by generation from the first *Adam*, we derive a nature corrupt and sinful: So, by regeneration in the second *Adam*, we are proved to be of the seed of CHRIST, and made *the righteousness of GOD in him*, 2 Corinthians 5:21. *Lastly.* To mention no more; let not the Reader overlook the alteration which the Apostle hath made in those words of *David*, when quoting them in proof, to the support of this doctrine. *David* speaks but of one person. *Blessed is he whose transgression*

is forgiven and whose sin is covered. But *Paul* speaks of many. *Blessed are they* (saith he) *whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered.* But where lies the difference? It is only in the application to the whole Church, both Jew and Gentile, when after redemption-work had been finished by CHRIST, the HOLY GHOST commissions the Apostle, to tell the whole mystical body of CHRIST, that all that are CHRIST'S, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free, are included in the same salvation. *If ye are CHRIST'S, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise,* Galatians 3:28-29. I detain the Reader one moment longer to remark, how very sweet those passages in the word of GOD are, (as is the case here,) when scripture explains scripture. When the Almighty Author of his most sacred Word, causeth one servant to open and explain, what the LORD had before given by another servant to the Church on those most interesting points. It is what the wise man calls, *like apples of gold in pictures of silver,* Proverbs 25:11. scripture explains scripture. When the Almighty Author of his most sacred Word, causeth one servant to open and explain, what the LORD had before given by another servant to the Church on those most interesting points. It is what the wise man calls, *like apples of gold in pictures of silver,* Proverbs 25:11.

ROMANS 4:9-12

Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision *only*, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. (10) How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. (11) And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: (12) And the

father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which *he had* being *yet* uncircumcised.

The Apostle having introduced this portion of *David's* writings, by way of confirmation to the doctrine of justification by faith without works, returns again to the history of *Abraham*, to gather further proofs to the same precious truth. He had now fully established the fact itself, that the thing is as he had stated, and that a man is blessed to whom the LORD will not impute sin; and he demands in a way of question, in order to shew that the whole is of grace, and not of works, when this blessedness is first enjoyed? Cometh it, saith the Apostle, after a man is circumcised, or was it before circumcision? And in answering this question he proves most decidedly, from the instance of *Abraham*, that it is perfectly unconnected with any ordinance whatever. For this Patriarch was in a state of justification before GOD, at least *thirteen years* antecedent to the appointment of circumcision. *Ishmael*, we are told, was thirteen years old when he was circumcised, and it was in the self-same day with *Abraham* his father. Whereas the justification of *Abraham* before GOD was thirteen years prior to the birth of *Ishmael*. Compare Genesis 27:25-26 with Genesis 15:1-7.

To what purpose then, it may be asked, was the rite of circumcision? The answer is already given in this very chapter, by the Apostle. It was intended as a sign or seal of GOD's covenant with *Abraham* and his seed. A mark or badge of separation, for it distinguished all the posterity of *Abraham* from all the earth. But it was not intended to act as a sign or seal of any promised grace to all the family of *Abraham* in

nature. This is very evident from the first day of its observance in the case of *Ishmael*, and very probably others of *Abraham's* house, who were circumcised, Genesis 17:27. There should seem to have been a sign or seal intended by circumcision to keep the whole seed of *Abraham* distinct and separate from all the world beside; but while it pointed to CHRIST, and in him had its full accomplishment, though it kept all the seed of *Abraham* in nature in expectation of Him to whom it referred, yet it became no promise to any but to *Abraham's* seed in grace.

And it is worthy the Reader's observation, that as circumcision among *Abraham's* seed acted as an outward sign or badge to all, and yet became no seal of any covenant promise but to CHRIST'S seed in grace, so outward ordinances do not convey any inward effects, but to the children of the Covenant in CHRIST. It were devoutly to be wished, that the Church of GOD in all ages had less respect to mere shadows, and more to substance. What are all ordinances, without an eye to the GOD of ordinances? What can baptism, or the LORD'S supper, benefit a sinner, dead in trespasses and sins? Signs and seals of the Covenant in CHRIST'S blood, can only be truly so, to those that are in the Covenant. And, to every child of GOD, the mere outward ordinance is nothing. His sign, *is* the Person, blood, and righteousness of CHRIST. And his seal, the work of GOD the SPIRIT, engraven on his heart, by whom he is sealed, unto the day of redemption, Hebrews 12:24; Ephesians 4:30.

I will only detain the Reader a moment longer over those verses, to observe what the Apostle saith, of *Abraham* being the common father, and head, of both Jew and Gentile, who

walk in the steps of that faith which he had, before he was a *Jew* by circumcision. *Abraham* was a *Gentile*, before he was a *Jew*. And, his justification before GOD took place, when he was in the Gentilism of an uncircumcised state. Of consequence, therefore, he was the common father of both. And, as such it is an error, to call the Jew the elder brother of the Gentile ; and wholly unscriptural. Both are one in *Abraham*, according to the faith. And *Abraham*, and all his spiritual seed, are one in CHRIST, Ephesians 1:4; Galatians 3:28-29.

ROMANS 4:13-16

For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, *was* not to *Abraham*, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. (14) For if they which are of the law *be* heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: (15) Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, *there is* no transgression. (16) Therefore *it is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of *Abraham*; who is the father of us all,

By the *world*, of which *Abraham* is here said to be the heir, cannot be supposed is meant the world, in the general sense of the word, including all mankind; for very frequently in scripture, the world in this view, is spoken of as in opposition to the Church of GOD. Thus the LORD JESUS, in his prayer for his people, expressly draws a line of distinction, between his Church, and the world; and declares that he prays not for the world, John 17:6; John 17:9; John 17:14; John 17:16. And, in like manner, his servants make the same distinction, John 1:10; 1 Corinthians 1:21; 1 John 2:15-16. But, it is the Church in the world which is here spoken of, such as JESUS himself mentions, John 3:16; John 6:33; John 6:51. And this promise

given to *Abraham*, was not, on any account, of a personal nature, because of his righteousness; for, at the time God called him to receive it, he was an idolater. Neither could it be for any obedience to the law; for the law was not given until four hundred and thirty years after. Neither could it be because of circumcision, for this promise was given to *Abraham* more than thirteen years before that was commanded. Hence, it must have been wholly with an eye to CHRIST. And very blessed it is to see, that both *Abraham*, and all his spiritual seed, are made one and the same, on CHRIST'S account; and in CHRIST, heirs with the Patriarch, in the same promise, Hebrews 11:9-10; Romans 8:16-17.

I admire the closeness and justness of the Apostle's reasoning, in several of these verses, in which he shews, the blessedness of GOD'S promise, in direct opposition to man's works. *If they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void; and the promise made of none effect* It is of no use for GOD to promise, if the accomplishment depends upon man's performance of the law. And, as man cannot come up to the law; so man can never attain the promise, if it depends upon his obedience. It is of no use to hold forth any blessings, if those blessings depend upon man's taking them, when they are put out of his reach. The prisoner, looking through his iron grate, beholds the liberty of those passing by; but his prison doors preclude him the enjoyment. The law may hold forth liberty, on condition of obedience; but if that obedience be impossible, the liberty is impossible also, Moreover, GOD'S promise is rendered void, if any thing of man's (services be taken into the account for obtaining it, But, if both the promise, enjoyment the promise, be of grace, then the grace

which *first gives*, will be manifested in giving power to *receive*; and thus will it be made sure, to all for whom it is designed. Reader! beg of GOD to be enabled to form a right value of the promise, which is CHRIST himself in all his fulness, suitableness, and all sufficiency: and beg also rightly to value the absolute gift of GOD in it, for depending not upon the worth or merit of man, but upon the free grace, and free gift of GOD in JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

ROMANS 4:17-22

(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed , *even* God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. (18) Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. (19) And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: (20) He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; (21) And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. (22) And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

The Apostle quotes from Genesis 17:4-5, what GOD had engaged for to *Abraham*. His being made *a father of many nations*, had there been no other assurance on the subject, would have proved, that both *Jew* and *Gentile* were included. For the Jews were but one nation, and distinguished from every other. And, as such, *many nations*, implied what had before been said, *all nations*; that is, all the seed of CHRIST, scattered in all nations, were to be blessed in CHRIST, Genesis 12:3.

There is somewhat very striking in what is here said, of *Abraham's* faith. *He against hope believed in hope.* The case in itself was hopeless. GOD had promised *Abraham* a son, from *Sarah*. The Woman, according to the course of nature, was past child-bearing. But what was that to *Abraham*? GOD had promised it: and that to *Abraham* was enough. Impossibilities are for men; but there is nothing impossible with GOD. He believed what GOD had said, GOD would perform. And this was *Abraham's* faith. Reader! it would be your happiness, and mine, if we could always do the same. It matters not how great soever the promise, when GOD is the promiser. You and I have nothing to do with the difficulties in the accomplishment. Be the promise ever so great, the obstructions in the way to the fulfilment ever so mighty; yet the faithfulness and power of Him that promiseth, when that Promiser is GOD, carrieth all before it. *Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain!* Zechariah 4:7. It will be a sweet improvement from this scripture, if the LORD the SPIRIT shall therefrom teach both Writer and Reader, to make the suited improvement from it. LORD! I would pray, that I may have a portion of *Abraham's* faith, upon every occasion through life! Enable me to bring my GOD's promise, and my GOD who promiseth, always together. And very sure I am, that then, every difficulty, which seemeth to arise in the way, will disappear. Reader! it was the language of one of old, who had a head-knowledge in these things, though he felt not an heart-influence, and well may those who know, the LORD, take up the same precious assurance: *GOD is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent. Hath he said,*

and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Numbers 23:19.

ROMANS 4:23-25

Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; (24) But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; (25) Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.

The Apostle makes a very blessed conclusion of this Chapter, by taking into the account, the whole Church; and telling the people, that the occasion of this record, was not so much to aggrandize the great father of the faithful, as it was to encourage all his followers in faith, to imitate his example. *Paul* elsewhere very blessedly saith, in confirmation of the same truth, that *they which are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham*, Galatians 3:9. And, beyond all doubt, notwithstanding all that is said of this venerable Patriarch, in commendation of his faith; (and too much cannot be said) the humblest and poorest believer is equally interested in all the blessings of CHRIST, in right of redemption. And for this plain reason. All is GOD'S gift, not man's worth. The Patriarch had no more faith than what was given him. Hence all he had he owed to the LORD, And all the LORD'S children do the same. CHRIST is the alone object of faith, the Author and Finisher of faith. And *by Him all that believe*, whether strong in faith, or weak in faith, *are justified from all things*, Acts 8:39.

I said in the former part of this Chapter, that we should find occasion in the close of it, to make observation of the righteousness itself by which *Abraham* was justified, that it might be placed in a clear point of view, and upon its proper

basis. And it will be proper to notice it here. Much is said in this Chapter, and in other parts of Scripture, of *Abraham's* faith, and that it was imputed to him for righteousness. But perhaps it is not so generally understood, as the Importance of the subject requires, what was imputed to *Abraham* for righteousness. Not his faith surely; for, had this been the case, Abraham's faith would have had the merit of works, even the work of faith. And this would have been to have given glory to the creature. A thing in itself impossible. And indeed faith, which is the gift of GOD, and not of a man's own creating, hath but one office, namely, to receive what is offered to faith, and this given freely of GOD to his people. It cannot therefore be the faith of *Abraham* that became his righteousness by imputation. And, moreover, the Apostle saith in those verses, that *it shall be imputed to us also, if we believe on him that raised up JESUS our LORD from the dead.* What shall be imputed to us ? Not *Abraham's* faith surely. And yet this must be the sense of the words, if *Abraham's* faith, and not the great object of that faith, be the thing intended by the expression. Very evident then therefore it is, that CHRIST all along, and his justifying righteousness, is what is spoken of as imputed to *Abraham*, and that the Patriarch was considered as righteous before GOD, in the perfect righteousness of GOD his SAVIOR; and the faith of *Abraham* was looking wholly to CHRIST as his justification, and this became the sole means of his acceptance with GOD, while the ardency of his faith, and belief in it, gave him a great blessedness of enjoyment.

If I detain the Reader a moment longer over these verses, it shall only be to observe the sweetness of what is said in the

close of the chapter, that CHRIST was *delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification*. Reader! I cannot implore a greater mercy, both for myself and you, than that the blessedness of this scripture may be a living principle of constant joy and peace in our hearts from the power of the HOLY GHOST. There is no guilt left upon the conscience when delivered from the curse of the law of Christ on the cross, acting as our Surety and Representative. And there can be no condemnation to his people where sin is done away, in that CHRIST arose from the dead for our justification. For where righteousness in CHRIST is imputed to his people, sin can no more be charged upon the conscience. So that both in the death and resurrection of JESUS, the safety of the Lord's people is secure. There can be no separation from CHRIST, and consequently no interruption to a perpetual justification in him. *He hath wrought out, and brought in, an everlasting righteousness, which is unto all and upon all that believe*. Hence, as the Apostle elsewhere blessedly concludes, *there is now no condemnation to them which are in CHRIST JESUS, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*, Romans 8:1.

REFLECTIONS

BLESSED be GOD the HOLY GHOST for the boundless condescension *of* his grace, in explaining to the Church the precious doctrine of justification by faith, without the works of the law. And blessed be his name for illustrating the truth yet more abundantly in the instance of the Patriarch *Abraham*. Now, LORD, through thy blessed teaching we see, wherein the call of GOD consisted, in taking the great father of the faithful

from his country and his kindred, and his father's house, to come unto the land which a covenant GOD in CHRIST shewed him. And doth not the same GOD in covenant now command all the Church to forget her own people, and her father's house, that she may be brought into the King's palace? Oh! precious faith, in a precious, precious SAVIOR! LORD I give all thy redeemed grace, that when called upon by grace, like *Abraham*, to go out into a place hereafter to be received as an inheritance, they may, like him, by faith go out, in full confidence in thy grace and mercy.

But let thy people learn, O LORD, from this beautiful illustration of the precious doctrine in the instance of *Abraham*, that the justification of thy Church and people is by CHRIST'S person and righteousness, and not our faith. That which was, and is counted for righteousness, is not our faith in that righteousness, but the righteousness itself imputed to the persons of the faithful, from their union and oneness in CHRIST. By faith in the Person and Righteousness of CHRIST, We do indeed enjoy the blessedness of it, but the work of faith, no more than other works in the creature, can give any title to it. And faith itself comes *from* and is *by* this righteousness. Oh! for grace from the LORD to have a right apprehension of the important distinction. And do thou, blessed LORD! grant to thy whole family the sweet enjoyment of their vast privileges. Neither the circumcision of the *Jew*, nor the uncircumcision of the Gentile, are any thing, where CHRIST and his righteousness are imputed; *Seeing it is One GOD which justifies the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel, both Jew and Gentile, be justified, and shall glory.*

CHAPTER 5

CONTENTS

The blessed State of a justified Soul. The Subject traced back to the Fall of Adam yet more fully, to shew, that Justification can only be by CHRIST.

ROMANS 5:1-5

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (2) By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (3) And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; (4) And patience, experience; and experience, hope: (5) And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

The Apostle opens this chapter, with shewing some of the immediate blessings arising out of a justified state before God in CHRIST. Having in the preceding chapters most fully and compleatly established the doctrine, and answered every objection, he begins this Chapter with stating the blessedness of it. *First*, He speaks of peace with God. *Secondly*, An access to the throne. *Thirdly*, A rejoicing in the hope and assurance of glory. *Fourthly*, The sanctified use of all afflictions. And, *Fifthly*, the enjoyment of the love of God, the influences of the HOLY GHOST, and communion in all the blessed effects of CHRIST'S grace.

I beg the Reader to observe the difference between the righteousness of GOD in CHRIST, which is the sole *cause of*

justification and faith, which is the *effect* of that righteousness, and by which it is enjoyed. A sinner is not justified by his faith, for, if so, in that case it would be the work of faith; and what difference would there then be, whether the work of faith, or the deeds of the law, became either in part, or the whole, the cause of his justification? The Apostle, in one of the preceding chapters, hath clearly stated the difference between the righteousness of GOD which justifieth, and the faith of the believer, who by faith enjoys that justification. *The righteousness of GOD (saith he,) which is by faith of JESUS CHRIST unto all, and upon all them that believe,* Romans 3:22. It is the righteousness of GOD which justifies. And this is *unto all, and upon all*; not their act, but the LORD'S; not their merit, but the LORD'S grace. It is revealed *from faith to faith,* Romans 1:17, not procured by faith, for faith comes *from* it, and is not the cause *of* it. For faith itself, as an act of our's, goes no further towards our justification than any other grace. And faith, as well as every other grace, is received wholly from CHRIST, and can constitute no part, no, not an atom, in justification; for this is solely in and by CHRIST,

I have thought it proper to state this doctrine in the clearest manner possible, to guard against any mistake which might arise either here or elsewhere, when the doctrine of justification by faith is the subject. The Apostle did not mean to say, that our justification is by our faith, for he had in the very concluding verse of the former chapter declared, that CHRIST *was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.* Hence the act had already past. And the *therefore* with which he begins this Chapter, is the immediate consequence of it. And some indeed read the verse in this

way: *Therefore being justified through our LORD JESUS CHRIST, by faith we have, peace with GOD.*

Pause, Reader! and contemplate the boundless mercy! We have *peace with GOD!* peace in the blood of the cross. *We who were enemies to GOD by wicked works, hath he now reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present us holy, and unblameable, and unreprouable in his sight,* Colossians 1:20-22. Oh! the blessedness of a justified state in CHRIST! Oh! the comfort, when by faith in CHRIST the soul enjoys it! And we have *access* also by CHRIST'S justification to the throne of grace. We are said to *stand* in this grace before the LORD. For by our adoption character, we have the privilege of children, whereby we cry *Abba, FATHER.* An holy boldness, a familiarity at the heavenly court, as those who are well known there, and well beloved there, in CHRIST. Reader! do you know the blessedness of this state, and are you in the daily habit of using it? Oh! Sir! it is a blessed, yea, a very blessed way of maintaining fellowship with the FATHER, and with his SON JESUS CHRIST, when by virtue of a conscious justified state in CHRIST, we go often to court, and feel ourselves there as children at home, when in their father's house. And ought it not to be so with every child of GOD? Hath not JESUS opened this new and living way by his blood? And doth he not dwell in the midst of the throne, to keep it open by his intercession? Oh! then! if you know the LORD, if you are in a justified state in CHRIST, let us make use of our high privilege. *Let us* (saith the Psalmist) *enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good, his*

mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth to all generations, Psalm 100:4-5.

But we must not stop here. *Paul* saith also, that *we rejoice in hope of the glory of God*. This is a third blessed effect springing out of a justified state before GOD in CHRIST. And I beg the Reader to consider the vast importance of this high privilege. *Paul* himself elsewhere calls it *blessed*. Speaking to *Titus*, he saith, *looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great GOD, and our SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST*, Titus 2:13. But it could not be blessed if it was not sure. If any guilt remained on the conscience, fear would damp the hope. Hence the justification here described by the Apostle, is considered by him as full, perfect, and compleat. We *have* peace with GOD. *We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand*. And in consequence *we rejoice in hope of the glory of GOD*, that glory which shall be revealed. When CHRIST, *who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory*. See those scriptures, Leviticus 16:21; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 8:1-39; Daniel 9:24; 2 Thessalonians 1:10.

And, Reader, do not overlook that other blessed property arising from a justified state, I mean the sanctified use of all afflictions. A child of GOD, when by faith he is brought into the knowledge of his adoption, receives all his exercises with a different aspect from men of the world. For afflictions of what kind soever they be, passing through the covenant, come out with an altered property, like waters of the earth, which, by running over certain minerals, take with them qualities of healing. *No afflictions, nor chastenings, for the present are joyous, but grievous; yet, sanctified by grace, they afterwards yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are*

exercised thereby, Hebrews 12:11. But it is a character which belongs to none but GOD's children justified in CHRIST, not simply to bear tribulations, but to glory in them. And this forms a blessed fruit of a justified state. GOD the HOLY GHOST, in his gracious office-work, *directs the heart into the love of GOD, and into the patient waiting for CHRIST*, 2 Thessalonians 3:5.

ROMANS 5:6-11

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. (8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. (10) 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. (11) And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

The Apostle here enters upon another sweet view of divine love, as instanced in the great work of redemption. The act itself not only astonishingly great and unexampled, but the time when it was shewn enhancing the mercy. Not simply when we were without any thing to recommend, but when we had every thing to render us odious in GOD's sight. Not merely undeserving, but ill and hell-deserving creatures. And the thing itself stands on record without parallel. For although in the common circumstances of life, it might perhaps here and there be found that some few of the more noble and generous of mankind would venture their life as a substitute for another, where friendship or the love of applause might prompt to it, yet for a *righteous man*, that is, one that simply

doth what is right between man and man, and no more, such instances would be rarely found. But what tends to magnify the riches of grace, and render the case of the death of CHRIST so illustrious and unexampled, is, the consideration that it was done for a set of men who were sinners, and at a time when it the midst of their sins against Him who died for them? It was thus GOD commended his love, and endeared to us his mercy. There is a double manifestation of this love, both in the FATHER'S giving his dear SON, and CHRIST offering himself as a sacrifice for the sins of his people.

And the Apostle dwells upon it, by setting it forth under a variety of views. The gift of GOD; the death of CHRIST; the justification by his blood; the reconciliation and peace; the joy in GOD through CHRIST, by whom, and in whom, we have received the atonement. And GOD the HOLY GHOST hath most blessedly caused his servant thus to represent it, in order that the Church might have the higher apprehension of the unspeakable mercy. Indeed, language fails to afford any adequate representation. Had some generous prince pardoned his rebellious subjects, on their returning to their allegiance: Had he purchased their freedom, with an immense sum, when they were in slavery; Had he taken them into his favor, and brought them near himself; These would have been gracious acts in manifesting his munificence and liberality. But what should we have said, had this prince done, as CHRIST, the prince of the kings of the earth hath done, given himself a ransom for them, died for them, shed his blood for them, washed them from their sins in his own blood, and made them kings and priests unto GOD and his FATHER? What shall we call this? And yet it is in this manner GOD

commendeth (that is, bids the Church to take notice and accept of,) his love towards us! Reader! let you and I learn always to accept the FATHER'S gift, and JESUS'S grace, in this most sweet and precious way. GOD *thus commendeth his love towards us!*

ROMANS 5:12-21

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (13) (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. (14) Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. (15) But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. (16) And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses unto justification. (17) For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) (18) Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. (19) For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. (20) Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: (21) That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Apostle having thus raised up the subject to the highest pitch of excellency, in shewing the blessed state of the soul, in being freely, fully, everlastingly justified in, and by, CHRIST; having received the atonement in the heart, and conscience; being fully applied, and made effectual by the HOLY GHOST;

and living *upon it*, having access daily, hourly, to the throne by *it*; and constantly *from it*, rejoicing in hope of the glory of GOD; goes on now, directed and led by the blessed SPIRIT, to trace back the wonderful subject even to the very fall of man, which involved our whole nature in one mass of ruin, and which none but CHRIST could deliver from. And the Apostle, in various ways, and by various statements, draws a parallel, between the *Adam*-nature of our fallen state, and the grace-union in CHRIST; to shew, (and which he hath done in a very blessed manner,) that as *Adam*, and CHRIST, are the two Covenant heads of each family, the relationship brings with it an union interest, and concern, in all that belonged to each, in this Covenant-character. I very earnestly entreat the Reader, to attend with great diligence to the statement the Apostle hath made. May He who taught *Paul*, teach both Writer and Reader of this *Poor Man's Commentary*. For, surely, the Apostle's mind was most blessedly led out in the contemplation, when GOD the HOLY GHOST guided his heart and pen to send this sweet scripture to the Church.

The Apostle begins this part of the subject, in drawing the parallel of the two *Adams*, so called in scripture, (1 Corinthians 15:45.) in order to represent them, as covenant heads of their people. By the sin of the *first Adam*, the whole race were equally involved in the guilt and punishment due to *original* corruption, although they had no hand in *actual* transgression. In like manner, by the righteousness of the *second Adam*, the whole Church became interested, although they bore no part in the vast work, either by personal holiness in themselves, or by obedience to the law of GOD.

This doctrine the Apostle prosecutes through several verses. In the instance of *Adam*, he considers all his children implicated, in all that concerned him. And, as it is said of *Levi*, the descendant of *Abraham*, that *he was in the loins of his father when Melchizedec met him, and blessed him*: Hebrews 7:10. So the whole race of mankind were in the loins of *Adam*, when he transgressed the commands of GOD, and were with him involved in the same condemnation. And equally to be considered must the whole Church be in CHRIST, being *chosen in him before the foundation of the world*, Ephesians 1: 4. Hence that sweet promise: *I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring*, Isaiah 44:3. Reader! pause over this view of the subject, and remember, that it is scriptural. And, do not pass away from it, before that you have fully brought home the doctrine to the mind, under due conviction. You and I both, daily, prove our relationship *to Adam*, from the *Adam*-nature we carry about with us, in the common infirmities of that nature, and the remains of in-dwelling corruption. Have we similar testimonies, in our souls' experiences of our grace-union in CHRIST? It is a grand subject of enquiry. For as it is most certain, that neither of us could have been involved in the sin and condemnation of the *first Adam*, had we not sprung from him by *generation*: So, equally certain is it, that we have no interest in the righteousness and justification by the *second Adam*, even the LORD from heaven, unless we are his *in regeneration*. The transgression of *Adam* the sinner, would never have hurted you, or me, had we not been born from him, and his blood ran through our veins; neither will the righteousness of CHRIST the SAVIOR benefit us, unless we are

found new-born in Him, and his Holy Spirit formed in our hearts.

It is very blessed to follow the Apostle, through the several parts of this Chapter, wherein he hath stated the consequence of things, by virtue of the Church's oneness, and interest with CHRIST. He puts the subject, under various illustrations of it, and in a very beautiful manner goes over it again and again, as if he would have no child of GOD ignorant, on a point of so much importance. He describes the reign of death *in Adam*, and the reign of life in CHRIST, under their different heads; and shews the awful consequence of the *former*, and the blessed effects of the *latter*, as set forth in all the circumstances of mankind. *Death* (said he) *reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression*, A period of *two thousand five hundred years*, when there was no written law, which by the transgressions of it, might have subjected to the penalty of death. And even on infants also, which never had committed, neither were in a capacity of committing, actual sin. A plain palpable proof of original sin, and death the sure consequence of it. He then argues, and with irresistible force of argument, that if such were the sure events which followed the original apostacy of our nature, in which thousands bore no part; ought not those blissful effects promised to the obedience and blood-shedding of JESUS be equally the privilege of his redeemed, to which they have none of them contributed? If so much evil followed the transgression of one sinner; must it not be equally right, that so much good should be the result from the righteousness of one Almighty SAVIOR? And especially as both the person and sin of *Adam*, carry with

them no proportion to the greatness and glory of the Person, and work of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. The *one* a finite creature. The *other* Infinite. The offence of the *one*, in the time-state only of the Church. The righteousness of the *other*, everlasting. The sin of *Adam* of one, that is, of the earth, earthly. The holiness of CHRIST, the LORD from heaven, Reader! ponder well the subject; and see whether, under divine teaching, your conclusion from the whole, will not join issue with the Apostle's; that if such be the reign of sin unto death, arising from the apostacy of our *Adam*-nature; how much greater must be the reign of grace through righteousness, unto eternal life by JESUS CHRIST our LORD!

REFLECTIONS

PRECIOUS LORD JESUS! I would say, as I meditate on this sweet Chapter; what hath my GOD wrought for his Church and people? Here I behold the blessedness of a justified state! Peace with GOD; access to the throne, to the. mercy seat, to the pardon office of JESUS CHRIST; and a sure foundation for a daily, hourly rejoicing, in hope of the glory of GOD. And, have I this peace? Am I indeed justified freely, fully, everlastingly, in the LORD my righteousness? Hath JESUS made my peace in the blood of his cross? Is it GOD that justifieth me? And shall I not demand with *Paul*, and say: *who is he that condemneth me?* Oh! the blessedness of a justified state before GOD. *There is now no condemnation to them which are in CHRIST JESUS, who walk not after the flesh, but after the;* SPIRIT.

Praises to my GOD and FATHER, for all his Covenant-love from everlasting! Praises to my GOD and SAVIOR, whose Suretyship righteous ness hath done more for me in the recovery of my

poor nature, in the *Adam*-fall ruin; than all the original and actual transgressions of the Church have done, to cast the redeemed down. And praises to my GOD the HOLY GHOST, in causing this blessed Scripture to be given to *the* Church; and writing the blessed effects of it in my heart, and the hearts of his people. Oh! for grace, to be in the daily, hourly enjoyment of it, and to live in the constant unceasing dependence upon it. *In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.*

CHAPTER 6

CONTENTS

The Doctrine of Justification by CHRIST, shewn to be a Doctrine of Godliness. And so far is it, in its Nature and Consequences, from leading to Licentiousness, that it is here proved to be the only Foundation for an holy Life in CHRIST.

ROMANS 6:1-11

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? (2) God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? (3) Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? (4) Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into 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. (5) For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: (6) Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (7) For he that is dead is freed from sin. (8) Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: (9) Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. (10) For in that he died, he died unto

sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. (11) Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Apostle having finished, in the *five* preceding Chapters, the great subject he had been upon, and having proved, with the clearest and fullest evidence, that justification before GOD, is wholly in, and by, CHRIST; begins at this Chapter to follow up the blissful doctrine, in shewing the gracious effects which flow from it. And well aware, how much the pride of the *Pharisee*, (which in his own person he had once so deeply felt,) would take alarm at the doctrine of free grace; and no less the profligacy of the carnal, would attempt to draw improper conclusions from the divine mercy, displayed in so rich a manner as in justifying the sinner without works: the Apostle opens the subject with putting a question into the mouth of both, yea, all classes of unbelievers, and such, as the Apostle knew, none but persons of their characters would venture to propose. If it be true, say they, that GOD doth all, and man doth nothing, towards his own justification; *shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?* Shall we not live as we list, and run on in accumulating transgressions, that GOD's grace may, (as *Paul* saith it doth,) more abound, where sin hath abounded? Dear *Paul!* hadst thou lived in the present day of the Church, and have seen as we see, thy sweet truths, taught thee by the HOLY GHOST, wiredrawn by many of the various professors; divinely inspired as thou wert, when writing this Epistle, thou wouldest hardly have escaped the odium which is thrown upon those who subscribe, with full consent of soul, and from the same teaching, to the doctrines of free grace!

But, Reader! observe, with what abhorrence, what holy indignation, the Apostle instantly refutes the foul calumny. GOD *forbid*, saith he. It is as if he had said: Is there, can there be a man upon earth, capable of drawing so base and ungenerous a conclusion? Would any man in common life, make the experiment of breaking his bones, because some kind and skilful surgeon would immediately heal them? Is this the way to reason, in the affairs of things relating to the present life? And shall we so argue, in respect to the things of a better? Because GOD, in a rich, free, sovereign mercy, hath provided a remedy, for the recovery of his Church from the Adam-fall transgression, whereby the LORD himself will accomplish the whole, and man shall have nothing to perform in it but to receive the blessing: shall this bounty in GOD tend to increase the sin in man? Is it not as plain as words can make it, that GOD's design by this reign of grace, is to destroy the reign of sin. *The SON of GOD was manifested to destroy the works of the devil.* And GOD's glory, in this instance, can only be promoted, where sin is destroyed. It is the want of grace, which makes men sin; and not the aboundings of grace which can tend to increase it. Reader! I pray you to attend to the subject, as the Apostle hath stated it. And, if the LORD be your teacher, will be bold to say, that you will discover, how unanswerable the conclusions of *Paul* are, in proof, that so far is the free grace of GOD in CHRIST, from opening, as some say, the flood-gates of sin; it is the only preservative to keep them shut. By this grace only, all truly regenerated believers in CHRIST, are upheld from the breakings out of indwelling sin, which remain in that body of sin and death, the best of men carry about with them. *For, if* (as the Apostle elsewhere saith) *CHRIST be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the*

spirit is life because of righteousness, Romans 8:10. And how (as the Apostie demands,) shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Not dead *in* sin, for that is the state of the un-awakened, unregenerated; being *so* by nature, and so remaining, while in the condition of unrenewed nature. Neither dead *for* sin, for CHRIST only hath died for sin, *the just for the unjust, to bring us to GOD, 1 Peter 3:18.* But dead *to* sin. And, which is the case of every regenerated, justified, sanctified believer, they are dead to the *guilt* of sin: for that is done away by the blood of CHRIST, Ephesians 1:7; Micah 7:17-19; Isaiah 35:5; Colossians 2:13-14; Revelation 1:5-6. They are dead to the *dominion* of sin. Verse 14, Ezekiel 36:25-27. And *how then shall they live any longer therein;* when the very principle which gave life to it in the heart, is destroyed? True, indeed, the child of GOD goeth humbly all his days, from feeling the remains of indwelling sin, and which he knoweth will never be wholly taken out, until death. Like the ivy in old walls, until the whole falls down, the root will remain. But grace keeps low the sproutings. And his consolation is, that though sin is in him; yet, through grace, he lives not in sin. *His life is hid with CHRIST in GOD. And when CHRIST who is his life shall appear, he will also appear with him in glory, Colossians 3:4.*

The Apostle having answered the unwarrantable, and unjust objection made by some to the doctrine of free grace, on the ground of its being supposed capable of inducing licentiousness; advanceth yet further, to shew the sanctity of life and conversation, among justified believers, from the doctrine of baptism. And the Apostle proposeth what he had to offer on this ground, in the form of a question, as a thing

perfectly well known and received. *Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into CHRIST were baptized into his death? Therefore, (said Paul,) we are buried with him by baptism into death. We are planted together in the likeness of his death. Our old man is crucified with him. The body of sin might be destroyed,* And hence, he draws conclusions the most just and proper, that a new life in CHRIST must be the sure consequence of these things.

I cannot propose to enlarge on every particular the Apostle hath here stated. It would swell our pages too much. But it will be sufficient to observe, that as *Paul* refers the whole of what he advanceth, as so many consequences arising out of baptism; it must follow, that he could mean no other than the baptisms of the HOLY GHOST. Water baptism, under whatever form administered, could never produce such blessed effects. The regeneration of the soul is the only cause of life, for being planted in the likeness of CHRIST'S death; and the only way by which the old man of sin becomes crucified with CHRIST, And very blessed it is, when, from the baptism of the HOLY GHOST at regeneration, the soul is quickened, which was dead in trespasses and sins; and is led to trace, that grace-union with CHRIST, whereby, from the FATHER'S gift, before the foundation of the world, being chosen in him, now in the time-state of the Church CHRIST hath accomplished the salvation of his people; and GOD the SPIRIT, by the washing of regeneration, brings the soul from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan, to the living GOD; Ephesians 1:4; Colossians 1:13-14; Titus 3:4-7.

I cannot refrain, however, from detaining the Reader to a short observation on that sweet verse, where the Apostle,

speaking of a oneness, and union, and interest in CHRIST, declares our participation both in the death and life of JESUS. *Now, (saith he,) if we be dead with CHRIST, we believe that we shall also live with him.* Reader! pause and calculate if you can, the blessedness of both states. *Dead with CHRIST!* When JESUS died on the cross, he died as the Head and Husband of his body the Church. He hung there the Public Representative of his Spouse, for whom he died. And every individual member of his mystical body was crucified with him. Precisely as our first father in the garden, when he sinned, all his natural seed then in his loins, sinned in him, and with him; and were equally involved in all the eventual consequences of that sin: So, in like manner, when CHRIST died for sin on the cross, all his spiritual seed were *in* him, and partook in all the blessedness of it; that is to say, in all the benefits of it, while He alone had all the glory.

Now then, (saith Paul,) if we be dead with CHRIST, we believe that we shall also live with him. And, without all question, his seed, his people, have an equal privilege in all the benefits of his life, as they have in his death. *Because I live, (saith JESUS,) ye shall live also,* John 14:19. Yea, they are united to him, and are one with him. The Person of CHRIST, that is, GOD and man in one, is united to every believer. And every believer, body, soul, and spirit, is united to the Person of CHRIST; John 17:21-23; 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

I must not stay to remark the numberless blessings which arise out of this most precious truth; but I beg the Reader not to pass away from the view of it, until he hath taken with him one or two observations, which when realized in the soul, will tend to make the subject very blessed.

Believers in CHRIST live with CHRIST, by virtue of their union with JESUS, and communion with JESUS in his righteousness, as justifying them before GOD. Accepted in the beloved, they are pardoned, and justified freely, in a perfect, uninterrupted, and everlasting righteousness: so that when CHRIST *who is their life shall appear, they shall also appear with him in glory*, Colossians 3:4.

And as, from an union with CHRIST'S Person, the believer in CHRIST is justified in his righteousness: So is he also *sanctified* in CHRIST'S holiness. Indeed CHRIST is made of GOD unto all his people, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; that all the glory may be in the LORD*, 1 Corinthians 1:30. And, it is very blessed to see, how all the Persons of the GODHEAD concur in this great design. GOD the FATHER hath from the beginning chosen the Church to salvation, through sanctification of the SPIRIT; to the obtaining of the glory of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, 2 Thessalonians 1:13; Jude 1; 1 Peter 1:2; John 17:19; 1 Corinthians 6:11.

And, as the Church lives with CHRIST during the present time-state of grace, both in his righteousness to justify, and in his holiness to sanctify; so all the body is interested in the life of glory, which he is gone before to prepare for them. Indeed, the grace in CHRIST here is the same as the glory to be revealed hereafter. The only difference is, that the one is suited for the life that now is, and the other for that which is to come. But, the blessing itself is as much the believer's portion now, as it will be then, in this sense, as well as many others, it may be said: *he that hath the SON hath life*, 1 John 5:12. And what a blessed state is the whole, from justification to glory!

ROMANS 6:12-16

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. (13) Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. (14) For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. (15) What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. (16) Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

If we read the Apostle's words in this passage, more in the way of promise than precept, we shall enter the better into the beauties of it. When *Paul* saith, *let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body*; he cannot be supposed as implying any power, or ability, in ourselves, to check the risings of sin by our own exertions. This would be, to make the grace of GOD, dependent upon the will of man. The same Apostle elsewhere expressly saith, that *it is through the SPIRIT believers mortify the deeds of the body and live*, Romans 8:13. And, I hope the Reader is not now to learn, that temptation to sin is not far away, if the HOLY GHOST were for a moment to remit his support. But, the words of the Apostle seem to be in the way of exhortation, where the precept is blended with the promise. To this, the Church answers: *hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: yea, my delight shall be in thy statutes*, Psalm 119:117. And, what a blessed promise follows? *Sin shall not have dominion over you*. And, Reader! what a blessed state would that Church, that believer be in, who daily acted faith upon this promise? And are not all such promises to be lived

upon by truly regenerated, justified believers? Was it not GOD's grace, which took away, in the first instance, the dominion of sin? And is it not now the same grace, which must prevent all the after risings of sin, in struggling for dominion? That which gave victory *then*, can only give victory *now*: And wherefore? But *because ye are not under the law, but under grace?*

I beg the Reader not to lose sight, (for the Apostle doth not,) of the handle which the Pharisee, or the carnal, would make of this doctrine. But it is such characters, and such only, which raise this cavil. No child of GOD with grace in his heart, can act but from that grace, in all his deliberate purposes. The LORD hath put his fear in his heart, that he shall not depart from him, Jeremiah 32:40. And this child-like fear, becomes the most persuasive of all motives, to love and obedience. They knew nothing, either of the child-like fear, or child-like love, which dwell in the heart of the regenerate, that can suppose what becomes the strongest check to sin, should encourage to the commission of it.

ROMANS 6:17

But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

I pause over this verse to consider it alone, as it stands, in my view, unconnected with every other. And, I do it the rather, because I am free to confess, that I have never yet seen any Writer, which hath given to my satisfaction the full sense of it. I should observe, that the words, as they stand in our translation, are perfectly correct, and in exact agreement to the original. There is no possibility, without injury, to add to

the verse itself, or to take from it. *Paul* thanks GOD, that they were in times past *the servants of sin*. But now, were in obedience, from the heart; that is, were now regenerated. Some read the passage: GOD be thanked that *though ye were* the servants of sin. But certain it is, that the original favors no such latitude of construction. But, say you, can it be thought, that the Apostle would thank GOD, that they had been in the drudgery of Satan, wearing his livery, and doing his service? Could this be a motive of thankfulness? To which in answer, I say, without deciding positively upon it; if the LORD's glory be the more advanced, and sin, which in itself is a deadly evil, working nothing but death, and everlasting ruin; be overruled, for bringing about greater glory to GOD, and greater happiness to man; it then puts on a different aspect. Just as poison is sometimes made a sovereign medicine for healing: and sickness, when sanctified, hath been found a means, under the LORD, of changing the heart. The sin of *Adam*, laid the foundation for the manifestation of CHRIST, as a SAVIOR. The SON of GOD would have been known as the Head and Husband of his Church, had sin never entered into the world; for he betrothed her to himself from everlasting, Hosea 2:19. But as the Redeemer, the Church would never have known him, had not her shame in sin, afforded an opportunity for the display of his glory, in washing her from her sins in his blood! And in this case, all those sweet songs in heaven would have been lost, which the redeemed now chaunt aloud, and will be sung by the Church for ever, Revelation 5:9. For myself, if I know any thing of my own heart, I hope that I can truly say, I hate sin, I would not willingly and wilfully commit a single sin for the world: yea, I loath myself in my own sight for sin, the sin of my poor fallen nature. And sin becomes more bitter

to me, as CHRIST becomes more precious. But, with all this, I say, I would rather be a sinner saved, and saved in such a way as I am saved in, by the blood and righteousness of the LORD JESUS CHRIST; than to have never known sin, neither known. CHRIST as a SAVIOR. Angels in heaven, which have never sinned, may, and do, praise JEHOVAH for his glory, and their happiness: but no angel can know JESUS, and love JESUS, for the same cause as a poor sinner can; and for which his name is called JESUS: *he shall save his people from their sins*, Matthew 1:21. I therefore can accept the Apostle's words in this verse, just as they are; and find cause to bless GOD, that I was once darkness, and in the shadow of death, when the SON of GOD came and brake my bands asunder. Like the poor man in the parable, having lain at the gate in a state of nature, full of wounds and sores; I can now better value a state of grace in the LORD JESUS, having been cleansed and healed in his blood. And, having once known by deep affliction, what it was to be miserable in sin; I now can better tell what it is to be everlastingly blessed and happy in CHRIST. GOD *he thanked*, (saith Paul,) *that ye were the servants of sin*. And GOD *be thanked*, my soul makes her responses to *Paul's* words, and adds, that by the regeneration of the HOLY GHOST, the soul-union with CHRIST, and the gift of the FATHER to his dear SON; by grace I am enabled to obey from the heart, that form of doctrine which hath been delivered.

ROMANS 6:18-23

Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. (19) I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. (20) For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from

righteousness. (21) What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. (22) But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. (23) For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Reader! when the Apostle saith, as in the opening of these verses: *Being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness*; we must be cautious not to carry the sense too far. You and I are not wholly free from sin. So far from it, that it is my constant sorrow, that I am so much the subject of sin. I know, I feel, I carry about with me, a body of sin and death. In thoughts, and words, and actions, how often do I feel the working of sin in my nature. And, So little am I become a servant of righteousness, that my daily complaint at the close of the day is, how little have I lived to the divine glory. But, the Apostle doth not mean, by the freedom from sin in the *one* instance, or the servant of righteousness in the *other*, a state of perfect holiness before GOD. All that is intended from the words of the Apostle is, that by virtue of redemption in CHRIST, his people are delivered from the condemning power of sin, and are brought into the glorious liberty of the sons of GOD. And as such, they have their fruit, that is, the blessed effects of CHRIST'S redemption unto holiness, even the holiness of GOD our SAVIOR, theirs by virtue of union and communion with Him; and the end everlasting life. Grace here, a sure earnest of glory hereafter.

And, I admire the very striking manner in which the Apostle sums up the Chapter, when drawing the nice, but proper distinction between sin, in its final consequences; and righteousness in CHRIST, as the believer's portion for ever. The

Apostle calls the end of sin *wages*, and declares those wages *to be death*. For, as a servant covenants with his master, to receive wages at the end of his labor: So, the sinner as truly covenants to receive death, which is his just wages, when at death he stands forth at the judgment seat of CHRIST. But, the Apostle varies the expression with respect to the LORD's faithful servants, when describing the eternal life, which will succeed to the present life. He doth not call it *wages*, but a gift: because it is not earned, but given. Not the demand of merit, but the blessing of grace; the LORD's free, voluntary, and gracious act, as his gift. The gift of GOD, which is eternal life, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD, *Thanks be unto GOD for his unspeakable gift!*

REFLECTIONS

READER! let us both learn from this most blessed Chapter, how to answer the character, of every description, who ventures, from the pride or corruption of his heart, to charge the doctrine of free grace with a tendency to an unholy life. Never, surely, were the motives to an upright and conscientious conversation ever found in the least powerful or persuasive in the soul, until brought home to the soul, in *the* death of CHRIST. And the child of GOD, who is dead with CHRIST, baptized into CHRIST, and buried with CHRIST, in his death; cannot but feel from the HOLY GHOST, an implanted conformity to the likeness of CHRIST, so as to bear part with CHRIST in his resurrection, and walk in newness of life. And, what dominion shall sin have over that soul in whom the HOLY GHOST dwells, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin? What shall tend to

mortify the deeds of the body, but living in the SPIRIT, and walking in the SPIRIT? Blessed SPIRIT of holiness! give grace thus to live, and walk, that we may manifest to all gainsayers, thy people are dead to sin, and cannot live any longer therein!

But oh! thou precious LORD JESUS! while seeking daily, hourly, grace from the HOLY GHOST, to adorn the doctrine of GOD my SAVIOR, in all things: never, never, for a moment may my soul forget, that the whole, and every part of redemption-work, and redemption glory, is thine. GOD be thanked that we were the servants of sin. And that the whole Church, both in heaven and earth, are brought out of this prison-state, is all of grace. And do thou, dearest LORD, cause me to, have my redemption by thee, always in remembrance! May my soul be more and more humbled to the dust before thee, that my GOD and SAVIOR may be more and more exalted. Through life, in death, and for evermore, be it my joy to acknowledge, that there can be no wage mine, but the *wages* of sin, which is death: and all the LORD bestows, even eternal life, with all its preliminaries can only be the free, the sovereign, the unmerited *gift* of GOD, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

CHAPTER 7

CONTENTS

Under the Similitude of the Marriage State, the Apostle in the opening of this Chapter, represents the Power of the Law,

over a Man that is wedded to the Law, as long as he liveth. But as in the Married State, the Death of one of the Parties destroys that Law; so CHRIST hath delivered his Church. The Apostle closeth the Chapter, in an affecting Representation of the workings of Sin in the Flesh.

ROMANS 7:1-6

Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? (2) For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. (3) So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. (4) Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. (5) For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. (6) But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

The Apostle is here particularly addressing the Jews, who were well acquainted with the binding obligation of the law. And he brings forward the marriage state, by way of illustrating his argument, that the obligation to the law, like that between a man and his wife, continued in full force the whole term of life. For, a woman which hath an husband, is bound to that husband during the whole of his life. But, if he dies, the obligation is cancelled. Her marrying then, becomes no breach of chastity: the former contract is done away. This is a well-known law in common life, and indeed is founded on the law of GOD. It can need no further illustration. From hence

then, the Apostle argues, that believers in CHRIST being dead to the law as a covenant of works, and the law dead to them; they are both lawfully and honorably married to CHRIST: and the evidence of this union appears, from bringing forth fruit unto GOD, from the graces of the SPIRIT, which in regeneration they receive. Thus the legal right of the thing is fully proved, even when considered only under the common acceptation of the customs among men, which are going on every day in ordinary life.

But, we must not stop here, in our view of the Apostle's figure. In the relation to CHRIST, and his Church, it ceaseth indeed to be a figure, for it is a blessed reality. The marriage between CHRIST and his Church, (of which every other among men is but a type,) carries the subject infinitely higher. For, the SON of GOD betrothed his Church to himself before the foundation of the world, and that for ever, Hosea 2:19; Ephesians 1:4. And GOD the HOLY GHOST preached this great truth to the Church, from the beginning of the creation of GOD. *And the LORD GOD said, it is not good that the man should be alone, I will make him an help meet for him.* And, when the woman was created from the man, and brought unto him, and were married; this union was declared to be a type and figure of CHRIST'S union with his Church. So *Paul* was directed by the HOLY GHOST, in after ages, to explain this wonderful subject. And so he hath done it, in his Epistle to the *Ephesians*. *This is a great mystery, (saith the Apostle,) but I speak concerning CHRIST, and his Church,* Compare Genesis 2:18. 21-25 with Ephesians 5:23 to the end.

Hence therefore, it will follow, that CHRIST and his Church were One before the foundation of the world: that the Church

was raised up to be an help meet for him, through all the departments of nature, grace, and glory: and all this, in an union, never to be dissolved. So that in this senses as the Head, and Husband of his Church, he hath always lived, and is always living. And so it is written, *For thy Maker is thine husband, the LORD of Hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer, the HOLY ONE of Israel, the GOD of the whole earth shall he be called*, Isaiah 54:5.

Neither in this sense hath there ever been, or can be, a divorce. For, although we read of the continued provocations of the Church, by reason of her adulteries; and the LORD, (speaking after the manner of men, while beholding her in her whoredoms,) saith: *Plead with you mother plead, for she is not my wife; neither am I her husband:* yet in the same moment bids her return, because *he had betrothed her to him for ever*, Hosea 2, throughout. But we no where meet .with any bill of divorce, the LORD had given her to put her away, though he demands any to shew it. Yea, the LORD, in the after days of his flesh, when openly tabernacling among his people, declared, that the doctrine of divorce was from *Moses*, on account of the hardness of men's hearts: but, (saith the LORD,) from the beginning of the creation it was not so. And, what GOD *had joined together, no man should put asunder*. It is JEHOVAH, in his threefold character of Persons, hath made Him, who is *fellow to the LORD of Hosts*, and the Church, one from everlasting: and nothing can arise in the time-state of the Church to separate. I cannot stay to write down all the scriptures which might be brought forward, in proof to this most blessed of all truths; but I earnestly beg the Reader, before he goes further, to turn to them in his Bible, according

to the order in which I have marked them; and if the LORD be his teacher, the glorious doctrine will appear to him with full evidence, Proverbs 8:22-31; Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9; Psalm 45:13; Ezekiel 16 throughout; Hosea 3:3; Isaiah 1:1; Romans 11:1-2; Malachi 2:15-16 for *treacherously*, read as in the margin, *unfaithfully*; Mark 10:2-9; Jeremiah 3:1 and Jeremiah 3:14.

When this view of the original, and eternal marriage of CHRIST and his Church is well understood, and established by scriptural evidence in the mind; we then go on to prosecute the Apostle's beautiful illustration of the subject, as it relates to the government of the Church, during the time state of the law. *The law*, (we are told by the same authority, in another part of his writings,) *was added because of transgressions till the seed should come to whom the promise was made*. And it acted as *our Schoolmaster unto CHRIST*. *But when faith is come we are no longer under a Schoolmaster*, Galatians 3:19; Galatians 3:24-25. Nothing could have been more happily chosen than this figure, to illustrate the great truth the Apostle had in hand. By the coming of CHRIST, the Church's lawful husband, he demands his lawful wife. And, by the work of GOD the SPIRIT in her heart in regeneration, *we are now delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter*. Sweet and precious thought! All the rigor of the law, all the threatenings of the law, its curse and condemnation, as the ministration of death; all are done away in CHRIST. CHRIST, as the Church's husband, surety, and head, *hath redeemed her from the curse of the law, being made a curse for her*. And the Church, brought by sovereign grace to

the knowledge and enjoyment of her high privileges in CHRIST, saith: *I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now*, Galatians 3:13; Hosea 2:7. See Mark 10 with the Commentary.

ROMANS 7:7-13

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. (8) But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. (9) For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. (10) And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. (11) For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. (12) Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. (13) Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

The Apostle, all the way along is expecting, from Pharisaical pride and carnal reasoning, continual objections to those precious truths; and therefore stops to answer all, that such men may bring. You will say perhaps, (saith he,) that under such views, is it not making GOD's holy law the foundation for sin, when you charge it as exciting *motions of sin in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death*? If the law of GOD stirs up in me, a disposition to offend; is not this charging the law as the cause of sin? To which *Paul* answers, with an holy warmth of indignation, GOD forbid! The law, by acting as a bridle to restrain, when it gives out its commands and threatenings, can never surely be charged as the cause to evil, because our corruptions are thereby more provoked to offend. When a man throws up a fence, to check the torrent

of waters; his wisdom is not impeachable, because those waters swell, and rage the more by the opposition. The sun is not chargeable with improperly shedding its warmth and sweet influences, because reptiles take advantage thereof, to bring their spawn into life, under its incubation. In like manner, the holy law of God loseth nothing of its holiness, because our ruined, undone, and unholy nature finds occasion, from the purity of its precepts, to manifest the greater opposition to it, by our impurities.—Reader! pause a moment to observe, and to observe with great solemnness, to what an awful state our whole nature is reduced by the fall! To such an extent indeed, that the very means the LORD hath adopted to shew to man his misery, the sinner perverts into a greater occasion of testifying the desperately wicked state of his heart! Oh! who knows, who can calculate, or fathom the depth of human depravity? What man hath ever arrived at the bottom of it, so as to have equal apprehensions to what it really is, of *the plague of his own heart*? Reader! If you and I ever make any progress, under divine teachings, in this first, and most important of all sciences; we must not wait to learn our lessons from discoveries of common sins, and transgressions. These, through grace, may be learnt daily, and alas! too often there is occasion afforded to learn them hourly in the events of life. *For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again*, Proverbs 24:16. But, when *the LORD layeth judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet*, in our most holy things; who shall calculate the iniquity found there? Isaiah 28:17. Sir! It is a solemn thought, but as certain as it is solemn, that were it not for our Almighty High Priest (as *Aaron* represented him of old,) bearing away the iniquity of our offerings to the LORD ; the best services,

and the best prayers, presented by any of the *Adam*-nature in our fallen state, would call forth everlasting condemnation! Exodus 28:38. JEHOVAH hath said: *I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me.* Sanctified *by* them in CHRIST, or sanctified *upon* them in their destruction, as *Nadab and Abihu* were, when offering *strange fire*, Leviticus 10:1-3. Oh! the unspeakable mercy of Heaven, that sin-bearing Lamb of God *to bear away the iniquity of our most holy things into a land not inhabited!* Leviticus 16:21-22. Oh! *the grace, and to the praise of the glory of that grace, which hath made us accepted in the Beloved!* Ephesians 1:6.

The Apostle prosecutes the subject yet further, under the same view, of the holiness of GOD's law condemning the sinner; and to take off all possible objections in the illustration of the doctrine, he brings forth the argument as if against himself. *I had not known sin*

(saith he) *but by the law; for I had not known lust except the law had said, thou shall not covet.* Paul here speaks in his own person, and of himself, looking back to the days of his Pharisaical righteousness. The time when he had a very high opinion of himself; and as he saith, *he was alive without the law once.* Not that he was ignorant of the law of GOD from his youth: for *he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers; and was zealous towards God,* Acts 22:3. But the meaning is, that he had not, in those days, the least knowledge of the spirituality of GOD's law. He was alive, in a cheerful confidence of his good estate before GOD; and by an outward attention to things, as they appeared before men, he considered himself very praise-worthy, and within a few steps

of Heaven. Reader! if there be a delusion upon earth, one more common than another, this is the one! How little do such men know of *the plague of their own heart!*

But *Paul* goes on. *When the commandment came, (saith he,) sin revived, and I died.* What doth he mean? When the commandment came! Why the commandment was in the world ages before *Paul* was born. He could not mean, therefore, that he had never heard the commandment before! But the sense is, that the law was never brought home to his conscience by the powerful hand of GOD the HOLY GHOST until his memorable conversion. Then the LORD, for the first time, opened his eyes to the right apprehension of the law, and to the right knowledge of himself, as a sinner before GOD: and the consequence was, that all those high towering thoughts which he had conceived of his own goodness, fell to the ground, and he himself fell with them a self-condemned sinner before GOD. Reader! what know you personally of these things? Hath the same LORD which taught *Paul*, taught you? Hath GOD the HOLY GHOST brought you acquainted with the anatomy of your own heart, and dissected to your view all its foldings? Hath the LORD laid open the workings of it, and made you out of love with it, as he did *Paul*? If so, you will find cause to bless the LORD for such a portrait as he hath caused the Apostle here to draw of himself; in which every man, taught by the same Almighty Master, and brought up in the same school, may discover his own features. *For, (as the wise man saith,) as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man,* Proverbs 27:19.

ROMANS 7:14-25

For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. (15) For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. (16) If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. (17) Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. (18) For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. (19) For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. (20) Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. (21) I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. (22) For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: (23) But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (24) O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (25) I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

I have not interrupted the Reader with making observations as we have passed through those verses, for they are too plain to need any; but in the close, I would now gather the whole into one view, and ask, if there can be a more humiliating account given of human nature, than what the Apostle hath here opened of himself? Let the Reader notice the strength of the expressions, *sold under sin; consenting unto the law that it is good*, but in the same moment acting in direct opposition to it; *delighting in the law of God after the inward man*, but *with the flesh serving the law of sin*. Some have thought, (that is, such as were never taught, as *Paul* was, the plague of their own heart), that the Apostle could not be speaking of himself, but of some other person : or, if of himself, that he referred back to the days of his unregeneracy. But, nothing can be more plain, than that it is *Paul's* own history he writes, and his own experience in the

very moment of writing; and which the HOLY GHOST taught him to instruct the Church concerning. And sure I am, that every child of GOD, savingly called of GOD, and long taught of GOD, as *Paul* was when he thus committed to writing what daily passed in his heart, will not only bear testimony to the same; but bless GOD the HOLY GHOST for the history, for it is most precious.

Let any, yea, let every child of GOD, in whose spirit the HOLY GHOST bears witness that he is born of GOD, examine what passeth daily in the workings of his own breast, and see whether be is not conscious, as *Paul* was, of the two different principles by which he is directed. The *I*, the Apostle speaks of, that is, the unrenewed body of sin and death, which is carnal, and sold under sin: and the *I*, that is the inner man, which is regenerated and renewed day by day! Surely there is not a man alive, truly born of GOD, and savingly called by the HOLY GHOST, but must be conscious of those two distinct and opposite principles in himself. And indeed the HOLY GHOST hath taught the Church to judge of his Almighty work of regeneration, by this very conflict between nature and grace, between flesh and spirit. *For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would,* Galatians 5:17. So far is this statement the Apostle hath made of himself to be supposed as referring to the days of his unregeneracy, that until he was regenerate he had no consciousness of any warfare, neither indeed was there in his life, or can there be in any man's life, while remaining in the state of an unawakened nature. *Paul* saith himself in this very Chapter, that he was alive once, before the commandment

came in this convincing light in which he saw it by regeneration. It was then only, when brought under the teachings of GOD the SPIRIT, that the commandment came, and all *Paul's* self-righteousness fell to the ground!

Pause, Reader! and take a leisurely review of the whole. Here is the great Apostle *Paul*, mourning and groaning over a body of sin and death; in which he declares, dwelt no good thing. He had been savingly converted, and miraculously called by the LORD himself before this, for more than *twenty years*. He had, during that time, been caught up to the third heaven, and heard unspeakable words, 2 Corinthians 12:2. He had been called by CHRIST, as a chosen vessel, to bear the LORD's name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel, Acts 9:15. And he had been especially ordained to the ministry by the HOLY GHOST, Acts 8:2. Such was the man, whose history we have been reading in this Chapter. And what is the sum and substance to be gathered from the whole under divine teaching, but this: (and which most plainly the LORD the SPIRIT' designed for the instruction of the Church from it:) all the LORD's people, after all their attainments, are in themselves nothing. In the LORD alone have we righteousness and strength! It is very blessed to learn our own nothingness, that we may the better know how to value CHRIST'S all-sufficiency!

We must not conclude our view of the Apostle here, without first noticing the lamentable cry he put up, in the contemplation of his sinful nature. *Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* He did

not thus exclaim, as if at the time unconscious how, or by whom, he should be delivered from it. For he immediately adds, *I thank GOD through JESUS CHRIST our LORD*. And long before this, he had told the Churches of his safety in CHRIST. He knew whom he had believed. His hope in CHRIST was blessed. His crown of righteousness was always in prospect before him, Philippians 1:20-21; Titus 2:13; 2 Timothy 4:6-8. But, while he was perfectly assured of his everlasting safety in CHRIST, he could not but daily mourn under the remains of indwelling corruption, which followed him as the shadow doth the substance. There is a great beauty in the Apostle's expression, in calling sin *the body of this death*, if it be as hath been said, that *Paul* then writing as he did to *the Romans*, alluded to a well-known custom among that people, who in cases of murder, punished the murderer by fastening the body of the person he had killed to his own; so that he was compelled to drag it about with him wherever he went. It lay down with him, and he raised it with him when he arose: so that it haunted his guilty conscience, and poisoned the air he breathed, by day and night. And such is the case of sin. For, every sinner is a soul-murderer, for he hath by sin destroyed himself. Hosea 13:9. And, when GOD the SPIRIT hath convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, every child of GOD, made thoroughly acquainted, as *Paul* was, with the plague of his own heart, is conscious of carrying about with him a body of death; and, from the breakings forth of sin in the unrenewed part, is haunted daily with the spectre of his own creating, and in breathing the effluvia of his own corruption. And although, like *Paul*, he knows his deliverance to be complete in CHRIST; yet while he remains in the present time-state of the Church, he groans under the burden of a

body of sin, which will never cease under one form or other, manifesting forth its in-bred evil, until it drops into the dust. Reader! these are blessed discoveries, however humiliating. They do indeed damp the pride of the Pharisee, and contradict the doctrine of what some men teach, but no man ever found in his own heart inherent holiness. But they endear CHRIST. They preach daily the necessity of coming to him the last hour of the believer's life, as he came the first hour of his conversion. They prove, yea, practically prove, that salvation, from beginning to end, is all of grace. They give GOD all the glory, and cause the soul to lay low in the dust before GOD. So *Paul* was commissioned to teach the Church. And so Paul found. *To win CHRIST and be found in him*, Philippians 3:8-14.

REFLECTIONS

OH! the blessedness of the marriage state in CHRIST! If a woman is bound to her husband so long as he liveth, and the husband to his wife; JESUS my husband, my Maker, my Redeemer, ever liveth; and I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine. And, though I have played the harlot with many lovers, yet will I go and return to my first husband, for I am his in an everlasting covenant which cannot be broken.

Blessed and Eternal SPIRIT! I praise thee for the account which thou hast caused thy servant the Apostle to give of himself in this sweet Chapter. Here, through thy teaching, I behold *Paul* the spiritual condemning *Paul* the carnal, and groaning under a body of sin, which will not let him do the things the soul would do, because evil is present with him. And do I not behold in it, O LORD, my own features of

character? Oh! for grace to enter into a right apprehension of the blessed teaching here presented and brought home to my poor heart. Surely, LORD! grace was in lively exercise in *Pauls* heart, when, from the conscious depths of sin in a body wholly of sin, the soul cried to the depths of divine mercy. And surely, the Apostle was enjoying sweet soul-union with JESUS, when under all, he found deliverance from sin and death, with all the consequences of evil in his own fallen nature, in the full redemption by CHRIST. Here, LORD, may my soul find deliverance also, while carrying about with me the present body my flesh, where dwelleth no good thing. Oh! for the unceasing and lively actings of grace and faith, to cry out with *Paul* under all these exercises; *I thank GOD through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.*

CHAPTER 8

CONTENTS

The Apostle, having in the foregoing Chapters, fully established the Doctrine of Justification by Faith: here enters upon describing the Blessedness of it. He shews the Privileges of the Faithful, from the first Stage of Freedom from Condemnation, to the final Entrance into Glory.

ROMANS 8:1-5

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. (3) 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: (4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in

us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (5) For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

This is a most blessed Chapter, and cannot fail to make the soul of that man blessed, in whose heart GOD the HOLY GHOST bears witness, the gracious contents of it are written. It begins, with stating the happy condition of the believer in JESUS, that there is no condemnation to them that are in union with him: and it ends, in declaring that there can be no separation from him, in grace here and glory hereafter. It opens with shewing the blessedness of a oneness with CHRIST, which secures from all the condemning power of the law; and it prosecutes the sweet subject through all the paths of it, from such an union with CHRIST, and interest in CHRIST, as preserves the believer from all the remains of in-dwelling corruption, the sorrows of life, and all that may arise, both within and without, to afflict the child of GOD in going home to his father's house. And it closeth, with challenging all created power to keep from GOD in CHRIST!

Perhaps the Reader will enter into the better apprehension of the Chapter, if he were to divide it into the several parts, in which the HOLY GHOST hath been pleased to direct the Apostle to treat the several subjects here brought forward. From the *first* to the end of the *fourth* verse, the blessedness of a freedom from the condemning power of sin is stated: and the believer justified in CHRIST, is shewn to be in union with CHRIST, and walking with CHRIST.

From the *fifth* to the *seventeenth* verse, the blessedness of the believer is shewn, in being led by the SPIRIT of GOD,

manifesting thereby his Sonship. So that, as the remains of in-dwelling sin hinder not the in-dwelling of GOD the HOLY GHOST; neither shall it hinder the resurrection of the body at the last day, nor the everlasting happiness both of soul and body, to all eternity.

The eighteenth verse opens with shewing the unceasing comfort and support the child of GOD ought to derive, from the assurance of this state of things, under all the afflictions and sorrows of life. From this verse to the close of the *thirtieth*, the believer is taught how much a justified and sanctified life in CHRIST is, or ought to be, lifted up above the pressure of the necessary exercises of a life of grace, leading to a sure life of glory in CHRIST. And, very blessedly is it proved in this part of the Chapter, that as in all the appointments of the LORD, the Church of CHRIST in every individual of his mystical body, is chosen to be conformed to the image of CHRIST in all things, that he might be the first born among many brethren; so all things must, and can do no other, but *work together for good to them that love GOD, and are the called according to his purpose.*

Every thing being now said that can be refreshing and consolatory, to shew the believer his high privileges in CHRIST, where neither condemnation can affect, nor affliction cast down, his justified state in CHRIST before GOD; the Chapter closeth from the opening of the *thirty-first verse* to the end, to challenge all created power to cause a separation between CHRIST and his people. And very blessed is that soul taught of GOD the SPIRIT, which, from the same cause as the Apostle enjoyed, can adopt the same triumphant language. Reader! let you and I, as we enter upon this precious Chapter, look up

to GOD the HOLY GHOST for this unspeakable blessing, that we may make it our own through his divine teaching; and sweetly, through his grace enabling us, rejoice in the transporting assurance, that being justified freely *in* CHRIST, nothing can separate us *from* CHRIST, and from the love of GOD which is in CHRIST through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

I pray the Reader as he begins the Chapter, to remark with me, how blessedly the Apostle hath worded it. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in* CHRIST JESUS, Strictly and properly speaking, there never was; for they were chosen in CHRIST before the foundation of the world, and chosen *to be holy and without blame before GOD in love*, Ephesians 1:4. But the sense is, that *now*, by the regenerating power of GOD the HOLY GHOST, they are brought forth to the knowledge and enjoyment of it, from the *Adam*-state of their fallen nature, and they *who were enemies to GOD by wicked works, are now reconciled in the body of* CHRIST'S *flesh through death, to present them holy and unblameable and unreproueable in his sight*, Colossians 1:21-22. And I beg the Reader not to overlook the Apostle's words in the opening of this Chapter, on another account: He saith, that *there is now no condemnation to them that are in* CHRIST JESUS. Neither is there. For in him, as their glorious Head, Husband, and Surety; they are fully justified. But the Apostle doth not say, that there is nothing in them to *condemn*. For they know, and confess, that from the remains of in-dwelling sin in them, there is much to condemn; yea, they condemn themselves, 1 John 1:8-9. But CHRIST hath taken away the condemning power of sin, in having answered all the demands of the law. And, the believer in CHRIST JESUS is in a

state of compleat justification before GOD in CHRIST and his righteousness. GOD the FATHER justifies, Romans 8:33. GOD the SON justifieth, Romans 4:25. GOD the HOLY GHOST justifieth, 1 Timothy 3:16.

And, I beg the Reader yet further to notice the Apostle's words, concerning those in whom there is no condemnation. They are said to walk not after the flesh, but after the SPIRIT. *Paul* cannot be supposed to mean, that a child of GOD freed from condemnation, is freed from a body of flesh and sin; for he himself, in a few verses before in the preceding Chapter, lamented with a bitter cry under a body of sin, and a body of flesh of his own, in which he said dwelt no good thing. But I apprehend, the walk of life here spoken of as distinguished from flesh and guided by the spirit, means, a life of faith in CHRIST; living under an abiding sense of being wholly justified by Him, and having no confidence in the flesh. No Pharisaical righteousness mingled in this walk. Not being puffed up with a fleshly mind. *Paul* elsewhere expresseth it: *To win CHRIST and be found in him*. I pray the Reader to turn to these scriptures, Philippians 3:4-11; Colossians 2:18-19. And doth not such views throw a light upon what follows. *The law of the Spirit of life in CHRIST JESUS making the believer free from the law of sin and death; All holiness only in CHRIST. CHRIST himself the law, the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. All fulfilled by CHRIST. All made ours from CHRIST. So that this SPIRIT of life in CHRIST JESUS, communicates the whole efficacy of it as from the head to its members, and they are free from the law of sin and death; and as one with CHRIST and in CHRIST, they are freely, fully,*

completely justified, and accepted as righteous in CHRIST before GOD.

ROMANS 8:6-17

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. (7) Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (8) So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. (9) But ye 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. (10) And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (11) 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 dwelleth in you. (12) Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. (13) 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. (14) For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (15) 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. (16) The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: (17) 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.

The Apostle, in order to shew the blessedness of being led by the HOLY GHOST, first begins to state the awfulness of a contrary condition, in being wholly under the influence of a carnal, unawakened, unregenerated mind. And what an alarming account he hath given of it? Reader! if the LORD hath brought you and me out of it, still let us look back, (and we may well look back with trembling,) and behold the precipice over which we both ran all the days of our unregeneracy, sinning with an high hand, ignorant of GOD, and ignorant of our own corruptions, before GOD. They are here said, *to mind the things of the flesh*, to be *in a state of enmity against GOD*,

to be in a total incapacity *of pleasing* GOD, and *to be carnally minded, which is death*. All their pursuits are to make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof! Their enmity against GOD is universal. They hate his holiness, his precepts, his perfections; his justice, his decrees, his sovereignty. They are at enmity with his providences, his dispensations, his appointments. They abominate his doctrines, his word, his gospel, and especially the choice of his Church in CHRIST. And living and dying in this state, the Apostle states the impossibility of salvation; for, saith he, *they that are in the flesh cannot please* GOD!

Reader! pause over the awful account, for it is awful, yea, tremendously awful. And, while you and I ponder well the solemn state of the carnal mind, which is enmity against GOD; is it possible for either of us to forget the long state of our unregeneracy, when we were in this very condition. Oh! how suited do I at this moment feel the words of the Apostle: *And such* (saith he) *were some of you! But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the LORD JESUS, and by the SPIRIT of our GOD*, 1 Corinthians 6:11.

To this alarming account of an unrenewed state, the Apostle gives the outlines of the contrary, in a state of grace. *But ye*, (saith he,) *are not in the flesh but in the spirit, if so be the SPIRIT of GOD dwelleth in you*. By which we are not to apprehend, that a state of grace is wholly unconnected with that which is of a state of nature. Not so: For *Paul*, in the account he gives of himself, plainly shews, that he felt but too sensibly the workings of corrupt nature still in him. But, by the expression of *being not in the flesh but in the spirit*; the Apostle meant to say, that GOD's people were not, as in the

days of their unregeneracy, wholly carnal, but were made sensible of their renewed state by the sweet influences of the SPIRIT, which marked them as children of GOD; and that the very opposition the remains of in-dwelling sin daily made to the life of GOD in the soul, became additional testimony to their adoption-character; in the flesh Justing against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: so that they could not do the things which they would, Galatians 5:17.

The Apostle hath marked down a few of the love-tokens of GOD the HOLY GHOST in these verses, and very sweet they are in testimony of the regenerate state of the LORD'S people, distinguished from the unrenewed; and as distinguished also from themselves, in what they were before that the LORD called them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands asunder.

As, first. Though the child of GOD still groans under a body of sin and death, which he carries about with him, and will carry about with him as long as he continues in the present time-state of the Church; yet the HOLY GHOST daily gives him to see his adoption-character in renewing, comforting, refreshing grace and favor. The Person, work, glory, blood-shedding, and righteousness of the LORD JESUS is dear to him. He feels his heart at times directed unto the love of GOD, and into the patient waiting for CHRIST, All which testify, that he differs, not only from the unawakened and ungodly world; but from what he himself once was, in the days of his unregeneracy. He was once darkness, but now light in the LORD, And, although all his enjoyments in CHRIST falls far short of what his soul longs for; yet the sweet seasons (for very sweet they are) the LORD gives him, blessedly testify the change wrought

by grace in the heart; and that *he who was once afar off, is brought nigh by the blood of CHRIST.*

Secondly. By the in-dwelling residence of the SPIRIT, the child of GOD is led to discover, that *the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness.* These are blessed discoveries, when under divine teachings we arrive to the apprehension of them. For, when this knowledge is attained, the soul no longer looks to the body, and the deeds of the flesh in part for justification before GOD. It is dead because of sin. It is virtually all sin. The body is never renewed, until at the resurrection. And therefore to look to that which is dead, to bring forth any thing of life, cannot be the effect of divine teaching. The child of GOD no longer expects fruit of righteousness from that stock. It is his consolation, under all that he daily feels, and with which he groans, in the workings of sin in the flesh, that the old man, though not dead, is yet crucified; and though not wholly destroyed, is dying daily. Sin shall not have dominion, though it too often appears. It shall not condemn, though it accuseth. JESUS hath taken away the guilt, and destroyed the power by his blood. And, in the mean time, though the body be thus dead because of sin; the spirit is life because of righteousness. Though, saith *Paul, our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day,* 2 Corinthians 4:16,

Thirdly. Amidst all the workings of this sinful body, which distress and afflict the soul, by their daily opposition to a life of grace; it is the blessedness and privilege of the child of GOD, when renewed by the SPIRIT, that they are no longer *debtors to the flesh to live after the flesh.* CHRIST hath freed

them from all the debts of sin. And GOD the HOLY GHOST preserves them by his sanctifying grace from the baleful influences of it. By the LORD the SPIRIT, they are enabled to mortify the deeds of the body. Not in their own strength, for they have none. Neither by their own exertions, for all would be found weakness in the day of temptation. But, it is GOD the HOLY GHOST which by his grace bears up the child of GOD, and carries him through all the paths of trial. Without him, the heart would be wholly laid open to the incursions of sin and Satan, as the ungodly, and unregenerate are. But with them who are under the influences of grace, when at any time *the enemy cometh in like a flood, the SPIRIT of the LORD lifteth up a standard against him,* Isaiah 59:19.

And *fourthly*, to mention no more. The leadings of the SPIRIT, and the witnessings of the SPIRIT, all manifest in their daily tokens of grace, the sonship and privileges of the regenerate in CHRIST. It is they, and they only, which have freeness of access to the throne, and to the pardon-office of CHRIST; and can, and do say, *Abba, Father!* No servants, no bonds-men, no unregenerate; none but of the family of GOD in CHRIST, who are heirs of GOD, and joint-heirs with CHRIST; can so approach, or claim such a relationship. An union with CHRIST is the only foundation for enjoying communion with the heirship of CHRIST. *It is because ye are sons,* (saith the Apostle elsewhere,) *GOD hath sent forth the SPIRIT of his SON into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father,* Galatians 4:6.

Reader! pause, and contemplate the blessedness of such a state! By virtue of their adoption-character, they are brought into the present enjoyment by faith, of their vast inheritance; and have a full right in CHRIST to the sanctified use of all

temporal blessings, the privilege of all spiritual blessings, and ere long to the compleat enjoyment of all eternal blessings; for they are *heirs of GOD and joint-heirs with CHRIST*. And I beg the Reader to observe with me, how the Apostle hath drawn the line of distinction in these grand concerns between the LORD'S people, and the ungodly world: the regenerate, and the carnal! Yea, let the Reader not fail to notice, the difference between what the child of GOD once was in the darkness of his mind, when in a state of unawakened nature: and what he now is when called by sovereign grace. And I request him also, not to overlook what the Apostle hath said, from his own experience, in relation to the body of death still with the believer. It is a grand point never to be lost sight of by the child of GOD, that the carnal mind is still enmity against GOD; for *it is not subject to the law of GOD, neither indeed can be*. All that is carnal in the child of GOD, is still of the same carnal nature as ever, and will remain so until it drops into the grave, and is changed at the resurrection, Philippians 3:21. *David*, ages before *Paul*, taught the same truth, being taught it himself of GOD; and confessed it to the LORD and to the Church. *The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart that there is no fear of GOD before his eyes*, Psalm 36:1. *David* did not read this solemn truth in another man's heart, but in his own: yea, from his heart it spake it, and without reserve. Reader! have you a heartfelt acquaintance with these things? Do you know, that a child of GOD, though when regenerate *in his spirit*, he is made a partaker of the divine nature, 2 Peter 1:4. and consequently in this renewed part, can never be holier even in heaven, than he is upon earth, being holy in CHRIST, and of the mystical body of CHRIST: yet, *in his flesh*, he is still the same body of sin unrenewed? Doth

the Reader know these things? It will be to his comfort, to get more and more acquainted with them, that through grace, he may learn to walk more and more humbly with GOD. Depend upon it, nothing will tend to endear to CHRIST with equal affection to the heart, as when made sensible, from the workings of the body of sin in our nature we daily need him. Nothing will tend more effectually to hide pride from our eyes as when convinced, that *in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing*. And, nothing will tend under GOD the SPIRIT to keep open a constant source of true godly sorrow and repentance, equal to the conviction, that *the body is dead because of sin, though the spirit is life because of righteousness in CHRIST*. Reader! do not dismiss the subject before that you have consulted the following Scriptures: Genesis 6:5; Job 42:5-6; Isaiah 6:5; Daniel 10:8; Romans 7:14, (to the end); Ezekiel 46:31.

ROMANS 8:18-30

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. (19) For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. (20) For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, (21) Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (22) For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. (23) 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. (24) 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? (25) But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. (26) Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be

uttered. (27) 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. (28) And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (29) For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (30) 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.

Under this part of the Chapter, we have a vast fulness of subject, which, if prosecuted through all its different bearings, would of itself form a volume. I must study shortness for the *Poor Man's Commentary*, while omitting nothing that is important to dwell upon.

The Apostle begins this passage with stating his views of the disproportioned estimate, between the sufferings of the present life to the Church and to all the members of it, how great or numerous soever they might be, and the glory which is to follow. And this is so plain and obvious as to require no enlargement. For, as the present time-state of the Church, compared to eternity is no more than a grain of sand to the earth: So, the sorrows of such a state can bear no greater proportion than a drop of rain to the ocean. There is a vast beauty in the expression, *the glory which shall be revealed in us*: meaning CHRIST. The SON of GOD in our nature glorified in his saints. In him, and through him, the in-dwelling of GOD in his threefold character of Persons, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, will be the glory revealed. Our utmost conceptions can go but a very little way in this subject. The LORD JESUS hath graciously opened to us the blessed contemplation, in what he said to his FATHER. *And the glory which thou gavest me I*

have given them, that they may be one even as we are one, John 17:22. And what a glory the LORD hath indeed already given his regenerate? What a glory is it to contemplate the union of CHRIST and his Church, from one eternity to another! Reader! have you ever studied the glory of the Church, what it was before all worlds *in* CHRIST? What it was during the time-state of JESUS appearing on earth in the Church's union *with* CHRIST? What it is now in heaven, in being represented there by CHRIST? And what heart shall conceive, what it will be, *in the glory*, as *Paul here* speaks, which shall be revealed in us *from* CHRIST; in his dwelling in his Church, and his Church in him to all eternity! *I in them* (said the LORD) *and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me,* John 17:23.

Concerning the creature here spoken of, waiting *for the manifestation of the sons of GOD*, being made *subject to vanity*, under the *bondage of corruption*, and *groaning and travailing together in pain until now*; various have been the opinions of various persons, but all entangled with difficulty in the apprehension. Some have referred it to angels, some to the brute creation, some to the world of intelligent creatures partaking in the common event of the fall. But the HOLY GHOST hath not been pleased to throw a light upon it sufficient *to* determine with any certainty. But it is a sweet consolation, be it what it may, the promise that follows, that this creature shall ultimately be delivered, from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of GOD. So the HOLY GHOST hath said by the Apostle in another scripture. All things shall be finally gathered in CHRIST, Ephesians 1:10.

But I pass by many other considerations, to call the Reader's attention to what is said in those verses, concerning the love, and grace, and mercy of GOD the HOLY GHOST. The Apostle saith, that the SPIRIT helpeth our infirmities, for we are ignorant how to pray; but He maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered: and that He who searcheth the hearts, knoweth the mind of the SPIRIT, and maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of GOD. Here is a vast depth of Scripture here, as it relates to the Person, GODHEAD, and Ministry, of the HOLY GHOST. But I must not indulge myself in entering into the whole particularly. A few observations only shall I offer.

And first, Here are the infirmities of GOD's children considered, which rendereth the help of the HOLY GHOST so truly blessed. They know not the extent of their own fallen nature. They are ignorant of the power of Satan. When they would pray, they are too often faint, and unable. And, though a throne of grace is open before them; yet they want words, and they want faith to come as they ought, to the mercy-seat, to seek mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Secondly. Here is the HOLY GHOST very blessedly set forth in his sweet office-character, namely, the helper of our infirmities in prayer. Thus the LORD the SPIRIT was promised, Zechariah 12:10, And thus he is found to his people, John 15:26-27.

But *thirdly.* It is very blessed to have a right apprehension how GOD the HOLY GHOST helpeth the LORD's people in prayer; that when they are ignorant what to pray for, how to plead, and with what words to come before the LORD; GOD the SPIRIT

puts the cry into their heart, and a spirit of wrestling in their souls, that they may plead like wrestling *Jacob*, and come off like prevailing *Israel*. This scripture shews. When we know not what we should pray for as we ought, (which we never can know but by his teaching,) the SPIRIT maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Not that the HOLY GHOST groans, but he gives a fervency of prayer in the souls of his people, which can only express itself in groans, not in words. Not that the HOLY GHOST makes intercession *for them*, (for this is the sole office of JESUS the High Priest,) but *with them*. The SPIRIT pleads with them, and not with GOD. He indites their prayers. He teacheth how to pray, and what to pray for. And what He teacheth them to ask upon earth, is in exact correspondence to what JESUS their Great High Priest is interceding for them in Heaven. The prayer taught by GOD the HOLY GHOST in their hearts, is like an echo to the intercession of JESUS before the throne. And this receiveth another blessed testimony, because it is not only in perfect unison to the intercession of CHRIST and the inditing of the HOLY SPIRIT; but it is in exact uniformity to the will of GOD, He who searcheth the heart of the poor petitioner knoweth the mind and will of GOD. So that all is harmonious, the FATHER, SON, and SPIRIT, in the precious work and grace; and all concur in those blessed purposes of salvation.

In the verse which speaks of the highly privileged lovers of GOD, who are the called according to GOD's purpose; we can only stay to notice, that it comprehends all the blessings of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. *All things work together for good*. GOD himself in his threefold character of Persons, and in all his Covenant offices, and relations: the

FATHER in his everlasting love and purpose: the SON in his fullness, suitableness, and all-sufficiency: and the HOLY GHOST in his operations, graces, and influences: all minister to this end, in every department of nature, providence, grace, and glory. And, the *call* implies the freedom of it, the fullness of it, the unmerited, unexpected, unlooked for, mercifulness of it: and all referred into the divine purpose, not human deservings; not man's merit, but GOD's mercy.

Neither doth the cause of those distinguishing blessings which is related in the verses which follow, strike the mind with less conviction of GOD's sovereignty and favor; namely, JEHOVAH's foreknowledge, fore-appointment, and eternal design of the Church to those mercies; that the glorious Head, and his highly favored members, might have a conformity. Every thing is here shewn to have been arranged and ordained in one continued train of order, that all should be *to* CHRIST, and *from* CHRIST, and *for* CHRIST; and all leading from the original and eternal design, through all the gradations of being predestinated to the being called, and from being called to the being justified, and from the being justified to the being glorified. Reader! ponder well these precious things, and call to mind the Apostle's advice, 2 Peter 1:10-11.

ROMANS 8:31-39

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? (32) 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? (33) Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. (34) 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. (35) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or

nakedness, or peril, or sword? (36) As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. (37) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. (38) For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, (39) 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.

The Apostle, in summing up the several contents of this very blessed Chapter, seems to be at a loss while contemplating the vast subjects contained in it; and, unable to express his wonder at the divine love, and the distinguishing mercy shewn the Church, cries out: *What shall we then say to these things?* On the part of GOD, he hath given every thing that is blessed. Yea, such astonishing love he hath shewn as passeth all understanding: he hath given us his own SON. He hath justified, CHRIST hath died, the HOLY SPIRIT hath witnessed. And therefore, *Paul* challengeth the whole creation to separate from CHRIST. And he goeth on to enumerate everything which might seem in the first view to militate against the present and everlasting safety of the Church, and bids defiance to the whole to keep from CHRIST. Reader! think, if you are able, the everlasting safety of the Church; and look up to GOD under the impression of the immense mercy with suited thanksgiving and praise. Oh! for an heart to believe the record which GOD hath given of his dear SON; and in every exercise, and trial of life, to keep in remembrance those sweet words of encouragement to hear up under all, which like an inscription speaks to the child of GOD as from the cross: *He that spared not his own SON, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him freely give us all things?*

REFLECTIONS

READER! can you, can I, find strength of faith, under the assurance of being justified in the blood and righteousness of JESUS CHRIST, to rest in him for everlasting life; then may we take part in the precious truth of the Apostle's words, for there is no condemnation to them which are in CHRIST JESUS, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. And, blessed be GOD for all the high privileges of a justified state before GOD. Led by the SPIRIT of GOD, we are the sons of GOD. And CHRIST being in us, though the body be dead because of sin, yet is the spirit life because of righteousness. No spirit of bondage any more to fear. No debtors to the law any more to dread. But, living in the SPIRIT, and walking in the SPIRIT, we through the SPIRIT do mortify the deeds of the body, and we shall live.

Grant, Almighty LORD and FATHER, grace to call thee *abba*, Father! LORD! by the SPIRIT of adoption we have received, give us to be conformed to the image of thy dear SON. And being called, and justified, and made heirs of GOD, and joint-heirs with CHRIST, we may at length be glorified in CHRIST for ever. And nothing, in life or death, in time, or in eternity, *shall be able to separate us from the love of GOD, which is in CHRIST JESUS our LORD.*

CHAPTER 9

CONTENTS

The Apostle having now fully established the Doctrine of Justification by CHRIST, and shewn the blessed Effects of it in the Heart and Conscience; here enters upon the Doctrine of GOD's original and eternal Purpose in Election. He treats of the Case of Israel in Abraham's Seed; and towards the close of the Chapter, shews the same Doctrine, in the Call of the Gentiles.

ROMANS 9:1-5

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, (2) That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. (3) For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: (4) Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; (5) Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

Perhaps no passage in the word of GOD is more difficult to apprehend, than the one at the opening of this Chapter. Here is the Apostle, in his regenerate state, entering with such warmth and earnestness of soul, into the spiritual and eternal concerns of Israel after the flesh, that he professes a wish to be accursed from CHRIST for the accomplishment of their salvation, And, he appeals to CHRIST for the truth of it. Yea, GOD the HOLY GHOST bears him witness he saith in his own conscience, that it is so. That *Paul* might feel, as he saith he did, great sorrow of heart in the view of his brethren after the flesh being shut out of CHRIST'S kingdom, is very probable. Natural feelings are very strong feelings. But here *Paul* is speaking as under the most fervent gracious impressions. And yet both nature and grace seem to be in direct opposition to what *Paul* here wished. For it is contrary to the first law of nature,

to wish a man's own damnation. And, it is contrary to all the finer feelings of grace, to contemplate, much less wish, being for ever separated from CHRIST upon any consideration whatever. It is a most difficult passage to apprehend. We meet with an instance in the first view somewhat similar, when *Moses*, the man of GOD, prayed so fervently for Israel, that he begged his name might rather be blotted out of the book of GOD than Israel, Exodus 32:32. But the book here alluded to, most probably meant the book of *temporal* life, and not the *eternal*. *Paul's* is a much higher note: *Accursed from CHRIST*. Indeed none but one, even the GOD-Man CHRIST JESUS, could bear the curse, and be made a curse for his redeemed. It was his peculiar honor and glory, Galatians 3:13. I must leave the passage as I found it, for I am free to confess it is attended with too much difficulty of apprehension for me to explore. One improvement may be drawn from it; when we behold such an ardent zeal for the welfare of immortal souls in the Apostle, to take shame in the recollection, how cold and lifeless all of the present hour are, who minister in holy things, in the ministry of the word and ordinances. Oh! for a fervency of spirit, both in ministers and Churches! LORD the HOLY GHOST! pour out of thy blessed influences, and cause a revival in this our day and generation!

Let it be observed, concerning those of whom the Apostle speaks, that the privileges *they* are here said to have enjoyed, were not spiritual. They were *Israelites*, because descended from *Jacob* by natural descent, which made them so far honorable in that alliance. But they were not of the spiritual seed, concerning whom it was said, *in Isaac shall thy seed be called*, Genesis 21:12. Neither is the *adoption* here spoken of, that adoption which is of grace, but nature. GOD separated this one family, with whom might be deposited the shadows and types of the covenant in CHRIST. But all

these were designed no further, than to minister to that *better covenant established upon better promises*, Hebrews 8:6. *Paul* felt, however, a very high regard for Israel after the flesh, in that they were not only his brethren, as a nation, but also as the LORD had so distinguished them with such unspeakable blessings, in their peculiar national character, with his ordinances, and above all, in that high honor that CHRIST after the flesh should come, *who is over all, GOD, blessed for ever. Amen!*

ROMANS 9:6-13

Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: (7) Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. (8) That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. (9) For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. (10) And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (11) (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) (12) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. (13) As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

The Apostle seems to have found his soul relieved at the opening of this verse, in calling to remembrance that the true Israel of GOD, notwithstanding the Israel after the flesh were shut out, had all the blessings of the covenant in CHRIST designed them. The people, the true Israel of GOD, whom JEHOVAH formed for himself, were still, and everlastingly must be, his chosen generation, his peculiar people, a royal priesthood. GOD called them a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation, Exodus 19:6. And *Paul* here makes the distinction between nature and grace, between Israel after the flesh, and

after the spirit. He runs up the subject to the fountain head of the appointment, and in the everlasting purpose, counsel, will, and pleasure of JEHOVAH, shews how the Church was chosen in CHRIST from the beginning; nothing in the children of promise, who were the happy partakers of it, predisposing to the mercy, or in the smallest degree contributing to it, because the thing was done before they were born. *Paul* most plainly and decidedly shews this, and confirms it by quotations from the Old Testament scripture. If the Reader will consult the scriptures referred to, and compare them with one another, the subject *Paul* had in view to establish will appear in its obvious sense and meaning, Genesis 25:21-27; Malachi 1:3; Galatians 4:28, to the end.

ROMANS 9:14-18

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. (15) For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. (16) So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. (17) For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. (18) Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

The Apostle here enters upon the justification of the doctrine he is establishing the proofs of in this chapter. He shews upon principles of common sense and right reason only, that the doctrine of Election is as clearly proved as any one circumstance in the ordinary transactions of life. And he manifests the justice and equity of GOD in the appointment.

And that he might carry every force of argument with him, he opens the subject in his usual way of a question. *What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with GOD? GOD forbid!* There can be none in GOD's choosing or rejecting, when neither that choice or rejection is induced by any thing out of himself, The children, when chosen or rejected, not being born, and consequently not having done either good or evil, can have had no hand in the business, but the whole is referred into the sovereign will of GOD. Hence, therefore, the children chosen cannot complain, for to them the sovereign will of GOD is an act of favor wholly undeserved. And the children rejected cannot charge GOD with injustice, since they have no claim to any favor, or right, which on terms of strict justice they could demand. Thus the matter stands. And here it must stand, and will stand, to all eternity, in opposition to all the querulous arguments and ungodly reasoning of men.

I do not mean to follow the subject any further than what the Apostle hath done. GOD's own declaration, which Paul quotes, *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion;* is with me final, unanswerable, and satisfactory. And the instance of *Pharaoh* most express in point. But I would beg the Reader to remark with me one circumstance, which I confess in my view is particularly striking, It hath through grace satisfied my mind for many long years concerning the sovereignty of GOD.

Among the carnal world, there is nothing that excites the bitter hatred of the human heart equal to the exercise of GOD's sovereignty, on the doctrine of election and reprobation. Every son and daughter of *Adam*, while in the unrenewed state of an unregenerate mind, riseth up in rebellion against

it. And yet, wonderful to relate, there is not one of the whole race, either son or daughter, but what, in the proceedings of their own life from day to day, absolutely preach and practise the doctrine both of election and reprobation in all they do or say. From the wayward capricious temper of the little child, to the petulancy and ill-humour of the man of grey hairs, they manifest this in their pursuits and desires, in the objects of their approbation or dislike, their predilection or hatred, almost every hour. They have their choice and aversions, as it respects, their company, their food, their dress, their pleasures, their conversations. If at their daily table there is a variety of dishes, to pamper the appetites of the luxurious, (as through the bounty of a bountiful GOD too often such persons in a shameful profusion abuse that bounty to the gratification of their unbounded lusts,) they will choose here or there, reject, or dislike, as their fancy directs them. And this without either rule or reason, either wisdom or good sense, nay, sometimes to their sorrow, in inducing sickness, and a thousand evils, and death. And should any venture to call them in question, either in their judgment or conduct, what anger sometimes hath followed? Is this preaching and practising election and reprobation, or is it not? And preaching and practising both with an high hand of sin and folly, and not unfrequently in numberless instances of injustice, dishonesty, and fraud! But, when the Judge of all the earth, who cannot but do right, declares, that he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth, the proud unhumbléd heart of man riseth in boilings of the most deadly anger, and complains of the righteous decree. So then there is but One Being in the Universe capable of acting with a sovereignty of power and wisdom, whose election and

reprobation must be founded on an unerring standard of what is right; and He, according to fallen man's judgment, shall be the only one precluded from the exercise of this privilege! Such is the blindness and desperately wicked state of the heart of man by the fall!

ROMANS 9:19-33

Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? (20) Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? (21) Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? (22) What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: (23) And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, (24) Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? (25) As he saith also in Hosea, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. (26) And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God. (27) Isaiah also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: (28) For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. (29) And as Isaiah said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah. (30) What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. (31) But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. (32) Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; (33) As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offense: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

The doctrine is here supposed to be taken as granted. GOD's sovereignty shall no longer be disputed, saith the daring sinner. Be it so, if it must be so. *But why doth he yet find fault?* Here's impudence to the full. Here's practical contempt of GOD, worse, if possible, than even denying his very Being! But in what a beautiful way and manner hath the Apostle taken the question, and answered it. How conclusive and satisfactory is the similitude of the Potter and the clay, in relation to forming vessels of what shape, figure, form, or usefulness he pleaseth. And who ever ventured to call in question the Potter's power, or the Potter's wisdom, when exercising his pleasure, in making one vessel to honor, and another to dishonor? There is however this difference (and to which the figure could not reach,) between the Almighty Potter in his ordinations, and the earthy Potter in his. The vessel and the clay are both the LORD'S own, for the earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; all are his by creation, first forming the clay, and then man out of it. So that had GOD, when he made man from the earth, made any other creature instead of man, there would have been no injustice done! for the earth, and the man made out of the earth, were both equally the LORD'S. But this could not be the case with the earthy potter. The clay he made his vessels from was already made to his hands, and not his. And his formings could be no other than clay, however one vessel might be designed for honor, and another for dishonor, Isaiah 64:8; Jeremiah 18:1-6; 2 Timothy 2:20-21.

Reader! I detain you over these verses, and over this doctrine altogether, only to make one or two observations from the whole. And, *first*, I beg you to remember that GOD'S

sovereignty stands just where it did from everlasting, after all that hath been said of it, or written against it. GOD is not accountable to his creatures for his conduct. It is enough to know that GOD cannot do wrong. He is *righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works*. His sovereignty is one of his distinguishing attributes. And that sovereignty is founded in perfect rectitude. Let the pride and arrogancy of men or devils cavil at it, the answer is the same, *My counsel* (saith JEHOVAH) *shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure*, Isaiah 46:10.

Secondly, It is one among the many precious signs of grace in the heart, when the mind and affections are brought over to the conviction, not only that GOD's sovereignty distinguisheth his Almighty character, but that all the LORD appoints is right. A child of GOD, when seeing any thing which appears to him mysterious in the divine administration, concludes, that it is his defect, and not the LORD's, which renders it so. *I was dumb*, (said one of old, under some sharp exercise,) *I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it*, Psalm 39:9. All must be right, and all cannot but be finally well, for it is the LORD's doing. This is a blessed frame of mind, when we not only bend to the LORD's appointment, but bend with holy faith and satisfaction. I cannot discover GOD's path, but I am sure that GOD's ways are right. His sovereignty is my security.

Thirdly, When we behold the great mass of men rejecting the sovereignty of GOD with the scriptures of GOD in their hand, and having all the advantages of the ordinances of the Gospel, we awfully discover how far our nature must be sunk in rejecting the counsel of GOD against their own souls. The very truths of GOD, when brought before such a character, only serve to discover yet more and more his natural enmity

to GOD, and the aversion he hath to GOD's gracious decrees by CHRIST. On the other hand, where the heart is brought to the unceasing acknowledgment of the divine Sovereignty, there a conviction accompanies it of being taught of GOD. *Paul* had no sooner GOD'S SON revealed in him, than *immediately he conferred not with flesh and blood*, Galatians 1:15-16. And *Paul* here gives his unqualified belief to the purpose of GOD according to election, verse 11 (Romans 9:11).

I must not dismiss this subject, before that I have first called the attention of the Reader to that sweet and precious conclusion *Paul* makes, from the doctrine of election, in the inducing holiness of life and godliness. The Apostle, speaking of the properties of distinguishing grace, saith, that *except the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we should have been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrah*. The Prophet, before the Apostle, had many ages before declared, that *the remnant of Jacob, that is, the seed of CHRIST, should be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as showers upon the grass*, Micah 5:7. And thus the Church of CHRIST is in every age distinguished. For while the earth, in the unawakened nature of *Adam*, is like the dry barren heath of the desert, which knoweth not when good cometh, the droppings of grace upon the heritage of GOD makes it flourish and blossom as the rose. And it is the Church which preserves the world from instantly perishing. If all the LORD'S family were gathered out, as *Lot* and his household were, from the cities of the plain, destruction would soon follow, Genesis 19:23-24. So that the doctrine of election is the very doctrine of godliness. The LORD preserveth the world for the Church's sake. And the holiness of the Church in CHRIST, is the sole

cause wherefore the world standeth. The same day in which *Noah* entered into the ark, the flood came and destroyed the world by water, Genesis 7:16-17. The same hour in which *Lot* went out of *Sodom*, the LORD rained down fire from heaven and destroyed them all, Genesis 19:22. Oh! how sure is it, that the earth oweth its present continuance to the lives of the faithful in the land. And how very sure also, that the doctrine of election is a doctrine according to godliness. *As he who hath called his people is holy, so are they holy in all conversation and godliness.* Reader! may the LORD give a gracious apprehension of these things, that we may both *give diligence to make our calling and election sure.* For, (saith the Apostle,) *if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our LORD and SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST,* 2 Peter 1:10-11.

REFLECTIONS

How sure, how certain, and how unalterably fixed, are the ways and purposes of JEHOVAH. From eternity the whole is *ordered in all things, and sure;* and through the whole time-state of the Church, GOD's purposes have been, and must be, fulfilled. As in the eternity of the LORD's nature, so in his ordinations there can be nothing liable to change. His sovereignty is the rule of all his actions, and his will and pleasure the invariable standard of good.

Sweetly, in relation to his Church, all is planned in wisdom; and nothing can arise to alter his ways towards his people. Electing love gave birth to the Church in CHRIST. And in the instance of *Jacob* and *Esau* it hath been shewn, that not only

before the children had done any act of good or evil, but, that the purpose of election might stand, it was said, that the elder should serve the younger; so that electing grace preserved what electing love had began. Reader! it is very blessed when the proud sails of human confidence give way to the sovereign decrees of GOD; and we hail GOD'S appointments as the result of GOD'S favor to his Church in CHRIST. *Oh! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of GOD! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

CHAPTER 10

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The Apostle is here expressing his deep Concern that the Jews were turning from CHRIST to the Law, He speaks very blessedly towards the Close of the Chapter, that no Believer, whether Jew or Gentile, looking to CHRIST, shall fail of Grace and Salvation in CHRIST.

ROMANS 10:1-4

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. (2) For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. (3) For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. (4) For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

This chapter, like the former, gives us a very interesting view of the tenderness and affection of *Paul's* heart. He knew what the LORD had said, that there was a remnant according to the

election of grace; and, therefore, unconscious who they were, in the great mass of the Jewish nation, he testifieth to the whole body of his brethren after the flesh, how eagerly he longed for their salvation by CHRIST. For the whole Jewish nation differed widely from the world around them in their apprehension of GOD. They had a zeal for his glory distinguished from all their neighbours. They were not as those nations were, Idolaters. They expected CHRIST. They honored the law in the external observance of it. But in the midst of all this, they had no consciousness of CHRIST, and were totally ignorant of Him as a SAVIOR. A righteousness of their own, or a fancied righteousness they were endeavoring to set up, all the mean time unconscious of the Person, and work of the LORD our righteousness.

Reader! it may be well to pause, and consider the subject as it concerns ourselves. An ignorance of CHRIST'S righteousness, and a supposed preparation for acceptance with GOD in a righteousness of our own, is the general creed of the present hour. The great mass of those who profess the Gospel, if engaged at all in a concern for salvation, is prosecuting the hope of acceptance, partly by the deeds of the law, and partly by the grace of CHRIST. But, this is neither law nor Gospel. It is not the law, for *a curse is pronounced upon every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*, Galatians 3:10. Neither is it the Gospel, for there we are expressly said to be *saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves, for it is the gift of GOD, and not of works, lest any man should boast*. Ephesians 2:8-9.

I would not wish the Reader to turn away from the subject those few verses contain, before that he hath considered, and

that very maturely, the charge *Paul* brings against those brethren of his, of whom he speaks. There is nothing as essential in forming the standard of true faith, as this very point of the sinner's justification before GOD. If we are confused in our apprehension of things here, that confusion will run, like the links in a chain, through every part in life and practice. Now the Apostle expressly saith, that CHRIST *is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*. Here then is the righteousness, the sole righteousness of his people. In this the soul of the true believer is justified before GOD. And, such is the infinite worth and perfection of it, that GOD beholds and accepts the persons of the redeemed in it, as fully and compleatly justified, as if they had wrought it out themselves. For CHRIST and his redeemed are one. The scripture blessedly saith concerning it, that it is *unto all and upon all them that believe*, Romans 3:22. See the Commentary on this passage.

And I beg the Reader yet one moment longer to bear with me while I add, that beside the proper apprehension of the doctrine itself, in order to a real enjoyment of the soul, there must be an heart-felt acquaintance with it in the conscience. The Apostle *James* calls that word an *engrafted word* which is able to save the soul, : James 1:21. meaning, that it lives in the heart, and is always remaining there. Not floating in the understanding, but influencing the whole life. A child of GOD, when regenerated by the HOLY GHOST, awakened to a sense of sin, and an apprehension of the Person, work, and glory of CHRIST; hath passed from death to life. He hath felt the sentence of GOD's broken law in his conscience; and hath fled from it to JESUS, and his compleat, all-justifying righteousness.

And here he rests. In this he finds a perfect security. And his comfort in it is not made up in the correctness of his judgment, but in the lively actings of faith in his soul. Reader! are your apprehensions of CHRIST, as the end of the law for righteousness, living principles, inwrought by GOD the SPIRIT on this foundation?

ROMANS 10:5-13

For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. (6) But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) (7) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) (8) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; (9) That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (10) For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (11) For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. (12) For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. (13) For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Nothing can be more beautiful than this short, but blessed description, of the difference between the law righteousness, and the Gospel righteousness, as they concern the Church of GOD. Both are alike called GOD's righteousness, because both are from GOD. But the one was never given in a way of justification before GOD, for by the deeds of the law no flesh could be justified in his sight. And it was intended only to minister to the other, in whom alone, as holding forth the Person and work of CHRIST, all the seed of Israel were to be justified, Isaiah 45:25.

I do not think it necessary to dwell in this place on the subject, having so largely considered it in the *third* and *fourth* Chapters of this same Epistle. I would refer the Reader to those scriptures. And, added to what is there said, I would just remark, that the expressions here made use of by the Apostle, of *confession with the mouth*, and *belief in the heart*, very decidedly shew, that *Paul* considered those principles as living principles, not floating merely in the understanding, but influencing the mind and conscience. Head knowledge, void of heart influence, is the bane of the present day. Thousands, it is to be feared, are resting in a name to believe, while virtually dead before GOD. *Paul* saith, *it is with the heart* (not the head) man believeth unto righteousness. And elsewhere he prayed for the Church, that CHRIST *might dwell in their hearts by faith*, Ephesians 3:17. There are two or three grand points of distinction, which mark grace in the heart from knowledge merely in the head; which the Reader would do well to attend to. *First*. In every soul truly regenerated, there is an heart-felt acquaintance with the Person, and work, and glory of CHRIST. JESUS himself explains it, in calling *it, seeing the SON, and believing on him*: John 6:40, that is, such a sight by faith, as can, and doth depend upon him for life and salvation. GOD the HOLY GHOST, who convinceth of sin, convinceth also of JESUS, and his all-sufficient righteousness; and inclines the heart *to believe*, as *Paul* here expresseth it, *unto righteousness*. *Secondly*, In every child of GOD, thus taught of GOD to know CHRIST, who he is, and to believe in him for salvation; there will be also, an heart-felt enjoyment of him, and his finished work, as the only desired means of salvation. This remedy for the recovery from the *Adam*-nature of sin, is beheld and accepted with holy joy and thanksgiving,

as GOD's own providing, and made use of accordingly. *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.* The affections are all in it. The soul is won to CHRIST, and the soul wins CHRIST, and desires to be found in him. Hence that sweet promise of JESUS is enjoyed, and the soul made happy in *durable riches, and righteousness,* Proverbs 8:17-21. And *thirdly,* to add no more. In every soul truly regenerated, there will be a daily coming to CHRIST, an entire leaning upon CHRIST, a full cleaving to CHRIST, as the Church of old is described, *coming up out of the wilderness,* Song of Solomon 8:5; Ephesians 1:1; Psalm 89:16; John 15:5. Reader! what saith your experience to those statements? These are heart-feelings, soul-enjoyments, which differ as widely from head knowledge unaccompanied by grace, as the sight of food, doth from partaking of it. Oh! the blessedness of knowing and enjoying CHRIST! *With the heart man believeth unto righteoustiess.*

ROMANS 10:14-21

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? (15) And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (16) But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? (17) So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (18) But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. (19) But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. (20) But Isaiah is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. (21) But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

The Apostle having shewn, that the children of GOD, whether Jew or Gentile, or wherever scattered, should find grace; and having quoted a well known passage to confirm it of the Prophet *Joel*, which *Peter* had also explained, in reference to *the remnant whom the LORD shall call*: (see Joel 2:32 with Acts 2:16-21.) here takes up the subject to shew no less the necessity of a divine mission, in every instance where the LORD would bless his word to the souls of the people. And, he makes references to other scriptures in proof, Isaiah 52:7 and Isaiah 53:1. But, the Apostle hath expressed himself so dearly on those points, as to render unnecessary any comment. I would rather, therefore, as a short improvement from the whole, request the Reader's attention to what the Apostle hath said on the subject of *faith coming by hearing*; that we may both enter into the Apostle's meaning, and, if it please the LORD, gather instruction under his Almighty teaching, on this interesting point *of faith and hearing by the word of GOD*.

There is somewhat very blessed in hearing the word of GOD, when GOD gives the hearing ear, and the seeing eye, and the understanding heart. *David*, under the influence of it cried out: *I will never forget thy word, for by it thou hast quickened me*, Psalm 119:93. And every child of GOD can say the same who hath felt the LORD's power, in the LORD's word, and like Job, hath esteemed it more than his necessary food, Job 23:12. See Jeremiah 15:16.

But while the people of GOD, when brought by regeneration into an heart-felt knowledge and enjoyment of the word of GOD, feel the blessedness and the sweetness of it to their soul's joy; it becomes the subject of interesting enquiry, how *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of GOD*? We

all know that faith is the gift of God. No man can create faith in his own heart, neither can he increase what the great Author and Giver of faith hath planted there. Let this be marked down as a principle perfectly incontrovertible. Faith is GOD's gift, not man's work. It is of GOD's grace, not man's merit. *Unto you, saith the Apostle, it is given to believe on him, Philippians 1:29.*

When this point is clearly and fully established in the mind, we shall the better enter into the right apprehension of what the Apostle saith: *faith cometh by hearing.* The LORD hath graciously appointed means and instruments for the promoting his glory, in his people's happiness; for the conveying to them many of his gifts and blessings. Now, faith by hearing is one of them. A child of GOD comes to the word of GOD. He hears in it of JESUS. His heart is warmed, and his affections excited thereby. And he finds his mind going forth in desires after CHRIST, and in a confidence, and love, and faith In CHRIST. Hence faith, in all those instances, may be said to come by hearing. And thus the LORD stamps a blessing on Gospel ordinances, and the hearing of his blessed word. The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Church of the *Thessalonians*, laid this down as a proof of their election, because the word was blessed to them in this way. *Knowing brethren beloved, (said he,) your election of GOD. For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the HOLY GHOST, and in much assurance,* I Thessalonians 1:4-5.

And, if my Reader be of them, who by regeneration know the LORD, he must have the same testimony in his heart also. Remember, my brother, that this faith which cometh by

hearing, doth not come in such an open display as many of the public manifestations of the LORD in his providence, or his grace, may. The LORD speaks in the still, small voice, as powerfully to his people's joy, as when in the thunder or the storm. His love and favor are equally manifested. Have you never felt, when hearing the word of GOD, an enlightening, refreshing, comforting, instructing, soul-strengthening communication from it? Could you not many times have said, as the disciples did, whose souls were refreshed with the divine discourse of JESUS himself, when talking with them in their way to *Emmaus: did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?* Luke 24:32. Surely it is the same LORD, who now speaketh, by the ministry of the same word, in the present day of the Church, when at any time bringing them *under his shadow and making his fruit sweet to their taste*, Song of Solomon 2:3.

And, what tends to endear this act of grace still more, (for it is wholly grace,) is the blessedness of it, in that it depends not upon our preparedness to receive it, or our deservedness of it, in endeavoring to prepare for it, but the LORD'S favor; for it comes *like the rain or the dew of heaven, which waiteth not for man, neither tarrieth for the sons, of men*, Micah 5:7. If the LORD was to suspend this, or any other blessing, till man made himself prepared for it; then would it never come at all. Precious JESUS! how suited are thy words here, as in a thousand other instances: *I am found of them that sought me not! I said, behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name!* Isaiah 45:1.

My Brother! let you and I delight to attend ordinances and the hearing of the LORD'S word; and not in any preparation of our own, but the LORD'S. For, my own part, I would pray to seek the LORD'S face in the LORD'S strength. Faith will never come by my attempting to create it in my own heart. Neither will I despond of receiving faith because of this. I am here blessedly taught, that *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of GOD*. Hence, I am not to consider what I can do; for I can do nothing but sin. But my business is, to consider what CHRIST, the great Author and Finisher of faith, can do; yea, what he will do, for his people. *I am come*, he saith, *that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*, John 10:10.

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WHAT a beautiful example the great Apostle of the Gentiles holds forth to all that minister in the Gospel of CHRIST, in his earnest desire and prayer to GOD, for Israel's salvation! With what rapture he speaks of his LORD, and the fulness of redemption in him. *Paul* well knew in his own experience, and therefore most affectionately longed for the apprehension of it in others, that CHRIST is *the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*.

It will be a very blessed use of this scripture, if from the statement the Apostle hath given the Church in this Chapter, the minds of the people are taught, under GOD, the vast difference between head-knowledge, and heart-enjoyment. Oh! for grace to rightly know, and as rightly to enjoy, the blessedness of the Apostle's words, that it is *with the heart*

man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation!

Blessed Author and Giver of all faith! Thou that art the glorious object of faith, and in whom faith centers all her hopes, joys, and expectations! Do thou, LORD, increase our faith in thee, and our dependance upon thee! And cause the several means of grace in thine house of prayer, to be blessed of our GOD! Oh! for faith, in the largest, fullest, and most extensive enjoyments of it, to be in the daily actings of my soul, that through GOD the HOLY GHOST I may be kept alive in the hearing of thy word, and by faith be enabled to keep up and maintain unceasing communion with my GOD and SAVIOR, in the enjoyment of it. Precious JESUS! do thou make me new and fresh discoveries of thyself, in greater frequency, and to greater extent. Let thy Person, thy love, thy favor, which is better than life itself, be the food of my soul every day and all the day, that by living a life of faith upon thee here, I may be fully preparing in body, soul, and spirit, for the everlasting enjoyment of my GOD in glory hereafter.

CHAPTER 11

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The Apostle here takes up the Subject again concerning Election. He states the Doctrine particularly, as relating to the Jew and to the Gentile.

ROMANS 11:1-10

I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. (2) God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elijah? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, (3) Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. (4) But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. (5) Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. (6) And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. (7) What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. (8) (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. (9) And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompense unto them: (10) Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back always.

The doctrine of election hath been, and must be, to every carnal mind, of all others the most offensive. And as the Apostle, when entering upon this Epistle, engaged in it, with a special view to establish the Church in the grand truth, of justification before GOD in CHRIST, without the deeds of the law; this involved in it the doctrine of election. And the Apostle, in the *ninth* Chapter, devoted the whole of it to this one purpose. And, in that very interesting part of the Epistle, he most fully proved the certainty of the doctrine, in the rejection of the Jews, and the call of the Gentiles. Foreseeing, however, that what he had there advanced, would rouse the resentment of the carnal and ungodly, and that some would misconstrue the doctrine, as though the whole body of the

Jews had been rejected of GOD; he enters upon this Chapter with shewing, the mistake of such men, and in his own instance proves, that there were among the Jews, as well as among the Gentiles, the LORD'S chosen ones. He begins the Chapter with a question, which was *Paul's* usual method, when he had some grand, and momentous point of doctrine, more particularly to establish, in order that he might the better confirm it. *Hath* GOD (saith he) *cast away his people?* And, he answers it with a kind of abhorrence; GOD *forbid!* Yea, the whole of GOD'S purposes, is with an eye to the preservation of his people. The whole, and every individual of that mystical body the LORD gave to his SON before the world, is to be gathered out of the present time-state of the Church. It was for this Church, the LORD went forth in acts of creation. Every thing in nature, and in providence, is made to minister to this one purpose. And when the grand object, in the recovery of the Church is accomplished, from the present time-slate in which she is now involved; the earth itself, with all that is in it, will be done away, like the scaffolding for a building, which is taken down when the building itself is finished; and CHRIST will bring home his Church to the eternal state of glory all along intended. The Apostle intimates, that this hath been the design of JEHOVAH, from the beginning. And in proof, he adverts to a well-known part of the scripture history, in the days of *Elijah*; 1 Kings 19:10-14, where, in the worst of times, there were in *Israel* seven thousand, whom the LORD, by electing grace, had preserved from the general apostacy. And hence *Paul*, in a most decided and unanswerable manner shews, that as it is electing grace in GOD, and not the smallest merit of man, which makes this difference there must be, for the carrying on the LORD'S

designs in relation to CHRIST'S Church, in the present time, and in all times, until the whole purposes of the LORD in his Church are accomplished; *a remnant according to the election of grace*. For, such is the everlasting and unalterable nature of things in their distinct properties, that grace in GOD, and merit in man, (if he had any,) must be always opposite to each other. It ceaseth to be grace, if man obtains anything by merit. And thus the Apostle, in a single verse, proves beyond all possible dispute, that all the Church of GOD, in every single instance receives, from beginning to end, in electing, regenerating, redeeming, justifying, sanctifying love, is wholly of grace. Through all the departments of nature, providence, grace, and glory, there is, there can be, not an atom in either, but what springs from this source, *This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise*, Isaiah 43:21.

But, while the Apostle thus clearly and unanswerably sets the doctrine of election upon its own just basis, he again foresaw an objection, which the unbelieving part of mankind would bring still against it. *Israel*, that is, *Israel* as a nation in the flesh, had not obtained what they sought after. But the election (saith he) hath. So that here seemed some difficulty. Nay, the objector would add, it is said, that GOD gave to them that were blinded a spirit of slumber, that they should not see. And the Apostle makes quotations, both from the Prophets *David*, and *Isaiah*, in confirmation, Isaiah 6:9; Psalm 69:22-23. But these points, so far from becoming arguments, to call in question the reality of the doctrine itself, only tend the more to establish it. Every thing in the word of GOD, connected with the history of the Church, proves GOD'S original and eternal choice, in the appointment. And, it is

impossible to trace that history, through any of the several parts of it, without being led to see, the LORD's distinguishing grace, and mercy, ordering and directing the whole.

In following up the Apostle's statement, as here given, between the Church and the world, between the *remnant*, as he calls them, *according to the election of grace*, and the *rest which he* describes as *blinded*, it may not be improper to call in to our aid, what the word of GOD hath said, in relation to both; by which, under divine teaching, we shall discover, that while the *one* received all from grace, and therefore had nothing to boast, but every thing to be thankful for; the *other* had no right to complain, having no pretensions to divine favor, and therefore no injustice done him. This view of the subject may be made evident, under both branches of it In relation to the Church. When it pleased GOD, in his threefold character of Persons, to raise up a Church, at the head of which the SON of GOD in our nature was placed, to be for JEHOVAH's glory and the Church's happiness; the LORD was pleased to love this Church with an everlasting love, and in proof of it, chose this Church, in all the individual members of it, in CHRIST: gave them being in CHRIST, and a well-being of endless life and blessedness in CHRIST; predestinating them to the adoption of sons, and appointing them to an everlasting state of holiness, and glory, in CHRIST; or, to speak in Scripture language, *that we should be holy and without blame before him in love*, Ephesians 1:4-6.

Thus ordaining, and appointing things, in the infinite mind and will of JEHOVAH, before all worlds; the events, which were to take place during the time-state of the Church, could not be supposed as counteracting what had been before arranged

in eternity; but rather promoting, and bringing about, the LORD'S original designs and purposes. When, therefore, the LORD went forth in acts of creation, and the Church, which had existed in the divine mind from all eternity, was now to be brought forth into being in the *Adam*-nature so ordained; the fall which followed, and in which the whole Church, as well as the whole world in the *Adam*-race were involved, could not do away GOD'S purposes, neither destroy that grace-union with CHRIST, which arose out of an everlasting love, incapable of being lessened or changed. It might, as it did indeed, lay the foundation for bringing greater glory to the LORD, in affording occasion, as had been before determined, for the Son of GOD, in the nature of his Church, to redeem her from the ruins of the fall, and for raising her up a spotless Church, to be the partaker with him, of all his communicable glory, in his kingdom for ever. Here we discover somewhat of the electing love of GOD, to the Church. To this source, as to a fountain, must be ascribed all the blessings manifested in such a distinguishing way, as is discovered, in the several streams, of redeeming, calling, justifying, sanctifying grace, *which maketh glad the city of GOD.*

In relation to the world, by which I mean the Christless world, the doctrine is equally plain and evident. The whole as well as the Church, had their being *in Adam*, the one common head. And, had they continued in the perfection of being in which they were created, this creature-perfection, with all its happiness, would have continued with them. But when in *Adam* all fell, and none but those who from grace-union in CHRIST, were to be recovered by CHRIST; Of consequence, those who never had any other relation to CHRIST, than as his

creatures, and not the members of his mystical body, could not be interested in his salvation. The *one* could not lose their blessings in CHRIST, because, as members of his body, they were part of CHRIST. The *other* could not receive benefit from CHRIST, having no union with CHRIST. And indeed, had the fall never taken place, the consequence of election would have still made a striking difference, between the Church of CHRIST, and the world. For while the world, in the *Adam*-nature derived from the first man, could have arrived to no higher source, than the nature from whence it originated; the Church from her union with CHRIST, and interest in CHRIST as her Head, must have had communion in all that belonged to CHRIST, and enjoyed the peculiar and personal blessings founded in that union, in time, and to all eternity.

Here then we may safely rest. CHRIST and his Church are One, And by electing love, with all its blissful properties, every child of GOD, who is conscious, that by regenerating grace he is brought out of the *Adam*-nature of the fall, into the glorious liberty of the sons of GOD; may well contemplate, for it is his privilege, and must be his happiness so to do, the wonderful subject, with the most profound reverence, adoration, humbleness of soul, and praise to GOD, in his daily walk through life. Oh I how often, and how earnest, will that cry of the soul arise before GOD, when, with the astonishment of the Apostle, he will feel himself constrained to say, LORD! *how is it that thou hast manifested thyself to me, and not unto the world?* John 14:22.

And, in respect to the Christless world, the fall of man cannot, in its nature and consequences, be a source of disquietude to the Church, more than the fall of Angels. *Secret things belong*

to the LORD our GOD; but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children for ever, Deuteronomy 29:29. The LORD'S sovereignty is an everlasting answer to all the cavils of the ungodly. Neither can the justice of GOD be impeached, if sin brings forth death; for this is but the natural consequences of cause and effect. And the words of our LORD are sweetly formed, for the uninterrupted repose of all his children, when at any time (tempted by the world, by Satan, or the ill-judged and mistaken feelings of nature, untaught by grace,) unbecoming thoughts may arise in the mind. At that time JESUS answered and said, I thank thee, O FATHER, LORD of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, FATHER! for so it seemed good in thy sight, Matthew 11:25-26.

ROMANS 11:11-36

I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. (12) Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness? (13) For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: (14) If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. (15) For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? (16) For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. (17) And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; (18) Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. (19) Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. (20) Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but

fear: (21) For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. (22) Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. (23) And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. (24) For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? (25) For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. (26) And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: (27) For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. (28) As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. (29) For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. (30) For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: (31) Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. (32) For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. (33) O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (34) For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? (35) Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? (36) For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.

The Apostle all along must be considered, as speaking of a distinction, between *Israel* after the flesh, and the *Israel of* GOD by promise. The *Israel* after the flesh, had no privileges, but in the outward ministry of the word. The *Israel* of promise, though they stumbled in the *Adam*-fall in common with the rest, and for a while (as in the instance of those who crucified CHRIST, but afterwards were pricked to the heart and

saved: Acts 2:23-37.) were living without GOD and without CHRIST; yet being in the Covenant, were brought to the knowledge of the truth, and saved with an everlasting salvation. If the Reader, in going over those and the like passages of Scripture, had these things always in remembrance, it would serve, under GOD, to throw a great light upon the subject throughout.

The figure *Paul* useth, of the olive tree wild by nature, and grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree, is beautifully chosen, to represent not only the Gentile Church incorporated into CHRIST in distinction to the Jewish Church; but also hath an allusion to both Jew and Gentile, yea the whole Church, in being taken from the old *Adam*-nature of the fall, and by sovereign grace, made a right noble plant in CHRIST JESUS, The Apostle's expression in allusion to CHRIST, is not only very blessed, in that it refers to the perfection of CHRIST, *for* his people, and *to* his people; but it runs it up to the first, original, and eternal cause, in the holiness of CHRIST'S nature, as the first fruit, and root of all. For CHRIST is the root, as well as the offspring of *David*. And, CHRIST was first chosen in the infinite mind of JEHOVAH, and then the Church in him, before the foundation of the world, Ephesians 1:4.

It would be well, if this grand and fundamental truth of our most *holy* faith, was fully formed, and established in the mind, in order to help us to right apprehensions of what CHRIST is in himself, and what he is to his people. Every thing is in CHRIST *of* holiness. Every thing is *of* CHRIST *for* holiness. And he is made of GOD every thing to us *in* holiness, in being our *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*, that *all our glorying may be in the LORD*, 1 Corinthians 1:30-

31. One or two words, on those great points, of CHRIST as he is in himself, and as he is to his people, will serve, under grace, to put this matter in a clear light; and, if the LORD be our teacher, we shall enter into a right apprehension of the Apostle's expression: *For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches.*

Now *first*, in relation to that holy, spotless, portion of our nature, taken by the SON of GOD into union with himself, nothing can be more evident, than that it was wholly a right seed; for it was underived from the fallen stock, and not formed after the ordinary method of generation. So that CHRIST was *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens*, Hebrews 7:26. And, what is highly proper to be understood, but hath not been as generally considered as it ought, that when to the infinite mind, and fore-knowledge of JEHOVAH, this holy portion of our nature came up before him and before all worlds; all his seed were in him, beheld in him, and considered as part of himself: *chosen in him*, as Scripture expresseth it, *to be holy and without blame before him in love*, Ephesians 1:4. In this sense, the Apostle's words appear most blessed. The *first fruit* holy, the *lump* also holy. The *root* holy, and consequently the *branches*. In CHRIST his whole Church was contained. Just as the first root of any tree, planted in the earth, contained in it, all the after trees, and branches to come from it. And, as *Levi* is said to *have been in the loins of his father Abraham, when Melchizedec met him and blessed him*: (Hebrews 7:10.) So the Church, in all her Individual members, was in CHRIST the seed of CHRIST; and blessed in CHRIST, from, and to all eternity. Hence all these sweet promises of JEHOVAH to his SON

: *I will pour my SPIRIT upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring*, Isaiah 44:3. Hence the same repeated : *My SPIRIT that is upon thee, and my words which I have put into thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth, and for ever*, Isaiah 59:21. Reader! I beseech you, pause over the lovely view, for it is most lovely! Oh! what a thought for a child of GOD to cherish in his bosom, that not only *He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one*, Hebrews 2:11, but every one of CHRIST'S seed, was in CHRIST, chosen in CHRIST, included in CHRIST, and (as the branch in the root) holy in CHRIST'S holiness, before GOD for ever!

And *secondly*: from this holiness *in* CHRIST and *from* CHRIST, the holiness of the Church must be wholly formed and derive all her holiness. For, as all original sin is from *Adam*; so all original holiness is from CHRIST. So *Paul* speaks, when saying that, *as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous*, Romans 5:19. And the sanctification of the Church is wholly ascribed, to *the offering of the body of JESUS CHRIST once for all. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever, them that are sanctified*, Hebrews 10:10; Hebrews 10:14. So that the sanctification of the Church is not *in* them, but *for* them. Not in any act of *theirs*, but in the act of CHRIST. Not in any holiness wrought *within* them, but *without* them. The happy partakers of CHRIST'S holiness do no more towards their sanctification, than towards their justification. So saith the Scriptures: and so their souls, when taught of GOD, bear testimony. For *Paul*, speaking to the Church at *Corinth*, when

declaring the grace of GOD shewn them in their recovery from the *Adam-nature* of sin, saith: *And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the LORD JESUS, and by the SPIRIT of our GOD*, 1 Corinthians 6:11. And all the sweet and gracious effects, which flow from the in-dwelling residence of GOD the HOLY GHOST in their bodies, which are his temple, and which manifest themselves in their life and conversation; are not their sanctification, but the result of their being sanctified. These are the *fruits*, not the *root*: the *effects*, not the *cause*. The one compleat source of the sanctification of the Church, as it appears before GOD, is *the offering of the body of JESUS CHRIST once for all*. And it is the testimony of GOD the HOLY GHOST concerning it, that JESUS *also that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate*, Hebrews 13:12. And, it is as expressly said to be the will of GOD in this offering, and for this purpose: *By the which will we are sanctified*, Hebrews 10:10. And when GOD the HOLY GHOST, by the sweet constraining influences of his grace, *worketh in us both to will, and to do, of his good pleasure*; opens to our view, the LORD CHRIST, in all his offices, characters, and relations; gives us to see CHRIST as made of GOD unto us all these, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*; and both teacheth, and enableth us, how to live upon CHRIST, in the enjoyment of all these : then, do we enter into the blessed apprehension of our union with CHRIST, and communion with CHRIST; and learn, by heart-felt experience, that as *the first fruit is holy, the lump is also holy: and as the root is holy, so are the branches*.

I stay not to make observations upon what is so abundantly plain as to need no observation, that, what the Apostle hath said, respecting the rejection of the Jew, and the calling of the Gentile, refers to the several ministrations in the Church, in the different ages, and under the different dispensations of it. CHRIST'S Church is but one. And that Church hath been set up, with her glorious Head, and Husband, from everlasting. Their names all given, and numbered. And hence, all Israel that is, all the true Israel of GOD, given by the FATHER to the SON, and redeemed from the *Adam* nature of the fall by the SON, shall be saved; and in the effectual call of GOD the SPIRIT, shall be brought to the knowledge of the truth. And these blessed events are included in what is said, and as the Prophet foretold, of *the Deliverer coming out of Zion, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob*, Isaiah 59:20.

Reader! I pray you to pause over the wonderful account, of what is related in this Chapter. And, if in the contemplation of the vast subject, the Apostle *Paul*, who had been caught up to the third heaven, and drank so deep into the mysteries of the Gospel, was constrained to cry out, as he hath here done: *Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of GOD! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* Think, with what veneration and awe, men of less knowledge in the divine science, ought to receive the sublime truths of GOD; referring all of the works and counsel of GOD into GOD'S own wise, and unerring will, and pleasure. Every thing in GOD, and from GOD, must necessarily be imperfectly understood by creatures, of the limited, and scanty apprehension of man. GOD in CHRIST, the SON of GOD tabernacling in our nature, his Church one in him, falling into

apostacy by sin, recovered by sovereign grace, the Church branching out into the double family of Jew and Gentile, the LORD'S ways in the call of the Gentile and the rejection of the Jew, together with all the wonderful events accomplished in bringing home the Church, through all the departments of nature, providence, grace, and glory: all these, and numberless other points connected with the vast subject, direct the mind into such a depth of mystery, that we are unavoidably led to the same view as the Apostle; convinced, that the ways and works of GOD, toward his Church and people, never could have been conceived, much less understood, had they not been graciously revealed by Him. Oh! wonderful Counsellor! Oh! gracious design of love and favor to the Church! What will be the wonders of eternity, when the whole shall come to be unfolded to the wondering world, of angels, and of men; and all will be found directed, to *give glory, and honor, and power, to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb that was slain, for ever, and ever, Amen.*

REFLECTIONS

PAUSE, Reader! and, beholding the rejection of *Israel* as a nation, after all their high privileges; consider what may be, what will be, the rejection of any, and of every mere nominal Church, which hath the *form*, but is destitute of the *power*, of godliness! To this our guilty sinful land, and to every CHRIST-despising generation like the present, how awful that Scripture sounds, in trembling accents: *If GOD spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee!*

Almighty Sovereign, LORD of Heaven and earth! give thy redeemed grace to receive all thy wise, and unerring appointments, with humble joy, and reverence. All must be right; because thou, LORD, hast done it. Let every one taught of GOD, enter into a full apprehension of that most precious truth : *Great and marvellous are thy works, LORD GOD Almighty, Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!*

And, amidst all the discouragements of the present day, though like the Prophet we find cause to mourn in secret, at the depressed state of *Zion*; yet let this always comfort: *even now at the present time, there is a remnant according to the election of grace.* Reader! forget not that it is grace, yea, all grace. May you and I have grace, to give our GOD all the glory!

CHAPTER 12

CONTENTS

In this Chapter, the Apostle shews some of the blessed Effects, which, through Grace, arise out of a Justified, and Sanctified State, before GOD. And he very sweetly proves thereby, the Work of Grace upon the Soul.

ROMANS 12:1-5

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (3) For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God

hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. (4) For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: (5) So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

In order to a right apprehension of the Apostle's meaning, we must carefully keep in remembrance, all that went before. *Paul* begins at this Chapter to shew, what gracious consequences must follow, in the life of a child of GOD, brought into the blessed enjoyment, of being justified freely before GOD, in the blood and righteousness of JESUS CHRIST. He had in the foregoing Chapters, very fully displayed the electing love of GOD the FATHER, the redeeming grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST; and the regenerating work of GOD the SPIRIT, upon the souls of GOD's people. Having therefore shewn, both the ground-work, and superstructure of the Church's mercies, and traced them up to their fountain-head, in the Covenant-love and faithfulness of JEHOVAH, in his three-fold character of Persons; he now calls upon the Church, with all the earnestness and affection of a brother, to live by faith, in the daily, hourly enjoyment of those glorious privileges. *I beseech you therefore brethren, (saith he,) by the mercies of GOD, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto GOD, which is your reasonable service.*

It becomes a point of infinite importance to the peace and comfort of every child of GOD, to have a right apprehension of what is here meant. My views, I confess, differ from all that I have heard or read upon the subject. I therefore, very affectionately, entreat the Reader to look up to the Almighty Author of his holy word, who guided his servant the Apostle's pen, that the LORD the SPIRIT may be his teacher in the

perusal of it. And my soul is looking also to the same matchless Instructor, that both the Writer and Reader of this *Poor Man's Commentary* may together be taught of GOD.

I will first beg to observe, what appears to me *cannot* be the sense and meaning of the passage, according to true scriptural grounds of faith, before I venture to offer, what appears to me *to be*, the real meaning of it. And when I have presented both before the Reader, I shall very humbly leave him to form, under the LORD, his own conclusions.

And here I begin with observing, that the *living sacrifice*, which the Apostle calls upon justified believers in CHRIST to present unto GOD, cannot possibly mean any thing of their own; for CHRIST is the One only sacrifice before GOD, and *by that one offering of himself once offered, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*, Hebrews 10:10; Hebrews 10:14. Neither can the *holiness* the Apostle speaks of, in which they are to present their bodies, mean any holiness of their own; for there is none holy but the LORD; and the Church hath no holiness but *in CHRIST* and *from CHRIST*, 1 Samuel 2:2; Isaiah 54:17. And *Paul* could not be supposed to mean the holiness of the creature; for he had told the Church but just before, in this Epistle, that his body was a body of sin and death, Romans 7:14-24. He could not mean, therefore, that the Church was to present *their bodies* a living sacrifice, and *holy*, unto the LORD. And equally foreign to the Apostle's meaning must it have been, to suppose, that the Church was to look for acceptance in themselves before GOD, in any righteousness of their own; for *Paul* himself taught, under the HOLY GHOST, that it is *to the praise of the glory of GOD's grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved*, Ephesians

1:6. So that upon none of those grounds, could *Paul* be supposed to recommend the Church to present their bodies before GOD.

Having shewn, and I hope upon true scriptural authority, what cannot be supposed to be the sense of the Apostle's words, I will now venture, and upon the same authority, to bring before the Reader what appears to me to be his meaning.

Let it be again remembered, that the Apostle had before fully established the doctrine of the Church being elected, called, justified, and sanctified by GOD in CHRIST. He begins an exhortation from these premises. And that little word, *therefore*, as an illative particle, he useth, as deducing all he had to say, and all he entreated from them, in consequence thereof. *I beseech you therefore brethren*, brethren in CHRIST, and as he elsewhere calls them, *holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, partakers of CHRIST*, interested from an union *with* CHRIST, in all CHRIST'S communicable holiness, grace, and glory. See Hebrews3:14; John 15:22.

Next, I pray the Reader to observe the Apostle's expression, *when* he saith, *I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of Goo*, What mercies did the Apostle mean? All are mercies we have from GOD. But I humbly conceive *Paul* alluded to what the Prophet taught the Church, and which *Paul* himself afterwards explained, *the sure mercies of David*. If the Reader before he prosecutes the subject further, would consult the scriptures on this point, I venture to believe, that he will be inclined to conclude with me, that such GOD the HOLY GHOST referred to in this passage. (Compare Isaiah 55:3

with Acts 13:32-39.) And, if this be supposed, *Paul's* exhortation will amount to this, that he desired the Church by the mercies of GOD in CHRIST, to come to GOD in CHRIST, and make this the one, and the only foundation in coming.

Now then we arrive at the main subject of enquiry, concerning this presentation of their bodies, which is to be, *a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto GOD, and* (saith Paul) *your reasonable service*. Holy scripture reveals no sacrifice but one. And this indeed is, a *living* sacrifice; for JESUS ever liveth to make it effectual, as a life-giving principle to his people. Having opened a new and living way by his blood, he ever liveth to keep it open by his intercession. *And* GOD the HOLY GHOST by putting forth the efficacy of it, unto the persons of the redeemed, makes it truly living in their hearts and consciences. In this new and living way we are commanded to come, and very blessed are the consequences promised to our coming; when *our hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water*. Compare Hebrews 10:19-22 with Ezekiel 36:25. (I need not tell the Reader, that the waters here spoken of by the Prophet, means the blood of CHRIST; for the blood of CHRIST is called *the blood of sprinkling*, Hebrews 12:24. And the HOLY GHOST is never said to be water sprinkled, or put *upon us*, but a well of water *in us*, John 4:14.)

If, therefore, the Apostle had in view, (as it should seem from all that he had said before in this Epistle he had,) CHRIST the living sacrifice, in whom, and by whom, the Church alone is justified; then in that living sacrifice and Person of her LORD, she was to present her whole body. And this, indeed, is a living and life-giving sacrifice, truly holy, acceptable unto GOD,

and our reasonable service; for it is most reasonable that the services of spiritual worshippers, acting under the SPIRIT'S constant influences, should thus present themselves continually before the LORD. But unless the words of the Apostle be considered in this sense, it is impossible to conceive, that *Paul* should direct the Church to do, what he himself could never perform, to present his body a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable unto GOD, when he groaned daily under a body of sin and death. Yea, he had before said to the Church, if CHRIST *be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness*, Romans 8:10. And how shall a body *dead* because of sin, present itself a *living* sacrifice?

Reader! *The LORD give you a right understanding in all things*, 2 Timothy 2:7. And, if under divine teaching, your views and mine correspond, we shall both see and through grace be enabled to follow, what the Apostle so affectionately recommends, when justified in the Person and work of CHRIST, by those mercies of GOD, to present our bodies indeed as well as our souls, daily, and hourly, upon the Altar of that living sacrifice, which is holy, acceptable unto GOD, and our reasonable service. For CHRIST is our New Testament Altar, (neither is there any other,) our sacrifice, and the sacrificer. And, as the whole person of every child of GOD, both soul and body, is united to CHRIST, both are included in this presentation. *He that is joined to the LORD is one spirit*, 1 Corinthians 6:17. And the LORD JESUS himself saith, speaking of the persons of his people. *That they all may be one, as thou FATHER art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us*, John 17:21. And, while *we know that he abideth in*

us by the spirit which he hath given us, we know also, that our bodies are the temple of the HOLY GHOST, which is in us, 1 John 3:24; 1 Corinthians 6:19. And, as it is by consequence of this union in our souls with CHRIST as regeneration, we are made partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust; and at the separation by death of soul and body, the soul joins the society of the spirits of just mm made perfect, until the morning of the resurrection; so, from the same union with CHRIST, the body at death sleeps in JESUS, until the last day, and equally one with CHRIST in body as well as soul; the body will be raised by virtue of it, to live with CHRIST both body and soul for ever. The HOLY GHOST bears sweet testimony to this most blessed truth in his word. For 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 dwelleth in you, Romans 8:11. See 2 Peter 1:4.

I do not think it necessary, after having so largely stated what appears to me to be the Apostle's meaning of the daily presentation of the child of GOD in the first verse of this chapter, to offer any thing more on what follows, in relation to the effects which arise out of it. No one who is a child of GOD, and who daily lives in acts of faith and grace upon the Person of CHRIST and his living sacrifice, will be *conformed to this world*. A conformity to this world, and its vanities and customs, is wholly the reverse of a life of grace. For it is expressly said, that GOD in his foreknowledge of his children the Church, did predestinate them *to be conformed to the image of his SON*, Romans 8:20. So that the very

predestination of the children is to this conformity to CHRIST, that CHRIST may be both the head to his body, and the first-born and brother among many brethren. And where this is the case, all such will be *transformed*, by the daily renewings of GOD the HOLY GHOST. And, as each regenerated soul is a member of CHRIST'S mystical body; so, through grace, each will be led into the suited office of that membership, being manifestly a part of *the one body in CHRIST, and every one members one of another*.

ROMANS 12:6-18

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; (7) Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; (8) Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness. (9) Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. (10) Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; (11) Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; (12) Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; (13) Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. (14) Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. (15) Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. (16) Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. (17) Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. (18) If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Here are gracious directions, which arise out of a life of grace in the heart, and such as are suited to the whole members of CHRIST'S mystical body; both to the ministers and people. And what is necessary to be observed, they were not given for the Church in that age only, but had respect to the Church of God

in all ages. I mention this the rather, because it might be supposed from what the Apostle saith about *prophecy*, that as the gift of prophecy, or fortelling future events, hath long since ceased, as being no longer necessary, this exhortation is done away. But the prophecy the Apostle seems to have had in view, when writing to the Church in common, as in this instance, had no reference whatever to that sense of prophesying which means predictions. *Prophesying* is sometimes used for *preach-ing*, see Matthew 7:22. And the Apostle recommended the Church at *Corinth*, to follow after charity, and to desire spiritual gifts, but father that they might *prophecy*. By which may be supposed he meant preaching, if the LORD should call them to it, 1 Corinthians 14:1.

In like manner, when the Apostle in this exhortation, recommends the Church not to be *slothful in business*; it cannot be supposed that he meant *worldly* business, and the concerns of this life. For, although it would be at all times reproachful for men to neglect the laudable and honest concerns of themselves and families, for the maintenance in the station of life where the LORD in his providence hath placed them; yet, for the most part, men are too much alive, and even the LORD's people also, to the pursuits of things temporal, to need exhortations on this point to wordly cares, it is plain that *Paul*, when he said, not slothful in business, meant *spiritual* business, for he immediately added, *fervent in spirit, serving the LORD*. And this became a sweet and gracious recommendation of the Apostle, and a proof of his feeling in himself what he had said to others just before, of being *kindly affectioned*. But had *Paul* been living in the present hour of the Church, what would he have said to that

cold indifference which marks the age in the lukewarm, *Laodicean* spirit, so painful to the real follower of the LORD JESUS, and so highly reprov'd by CHRIST himself! Revelation 3:15, 16.

There is not only a great loveliness in the christian graces which the Apostle hath enumerated in those verses, but also a beautiful order in the manner in which he hath marked them down. *Rejoicing in hope*, is very suitably placed before the being *patient in tribulation*. And the *rejoicing* with the happy, before the *weeping* with them that Weep. For until the child of GOD is himself established in the grace of hope, he cannot know how to minister to others the consolation. Neither can one mingle the tear of grace with the mourner, unless he himself hath had his own tears mingled with the spiced wine of the pomegranate. I refer the Reader to my Commentary on these points for the right apprehension, according to my view, of those sweet and gracious employments, Romans 5:1-5; Matthew 5:1-12.

ROMANS 12:19-21

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. (20) Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. (21) Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

What a very lovely view is here given of the Apostle's mind, in the recommendation he hath here set forth to the Church, in our dealings with our enemies! And how tenderly hath the Apostle enjoined it, as if conscious of the difficulty of the thing itself, in opening what he had to say, with *dearly beloved!*

Reader! was there ever a recommendation like this, discoverable, but in the holy religion of the holy LORD JESUS? I pray the Reader to turn to the words of JESUS, and he will perceive from whom *Paul* learnt the sweet lesson, which he here recommends to others, Matthew 4:43-48 and Commentary. And what a beautiful figure is added by the Apostle of heaping coals of fire on *the* adversary's head. Not to hurt, neither to expose him to the anger of the LORD; but to meltdown his angry passions, and to win him over to the cause of GOD and CHRIST, Oh! the blessedness of that grace of the LORD, which, when in lively exercise in the heart, can, and will, enable a poor sinner thus to feel for another poor sinner; and in the contemplation of the blessed JESUS, *to recompence good for evil, and to overcome evil with good!*

REFLECTIONS

PRECIOUS LORD JESUS! in the unceasing view of thee, and thy living sacrifice, through the mercies of Covenant-love, oh! may I be enabled to come daily, hourly, to the throne of grace, and present myself in thy holiness, for acceptance before GOD, as the reasonably service of thy redeemed. And do thou LORD, grant me grace, to be daily, hourly, weaning from a world, from which I am momentarily departing, that I may no longer be conformed to it, but transformed, by the renewing of my mind, in the unceasing renewings of the HOLY GHOST. Yes! thou dear LORD! through thee I shall prove my membership in CHRIST, and with his Church, in the exercise of all those sweet graces thy servant Apostle hath enumerated. And do thou, my honored LORD, so help me on by thy gracious, unceasing manifestations, through the whole of my

walk and conversation while here below, that I may daily feel my need of thee, and daily act every grace upon thee, and by thee. Surely, LORD! grace is kept alive by grace received from my LORD. And, if my LORD will give my poor soul out of his rich fulness, grace for grace, then will his grace be manifested in all my life and conversation. Living *upon* CHRIST, walking *with* CHRIST, and receiving *from* CHRIST, then will all the fruits and effects of his grace be holiness, and CHRIST my portion for ever.

CHAPTER 13

CONTENTS

Here are various Directions concerning Christian Graces, And the Chapter concludes with an affecting call of the Apostle from the shortness of Life, to be always clothed with CHRIST.

ROMANS 13:1-10

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. (2) Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. (3) For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: (4) For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. (5) Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. (6) For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. (7) Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear;

honor to whom honor. (8) Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. (9) For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. (10) Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

The obedience which the Apostle enforceth to the civil powers, is abundantly heightened in the consideration, that what *Paul* here recommended to the Church then at *Rome*, of a peaceable submission to the higher powers, which were heathens; comes home with double argument, considered as to Christian Princes. And, indeed, the motives which the Apostle adopts in recommending those duties, are in themselves unanswerable. All government must be the result of divine ordination. And the LORD's design in that ordination is gracious. His Church cannot but derive blessedness from it, however it may be administered, agreeably to that comprehensive promise, Romans 8:28. And, if the LORD enjoined his Church, as he did, when going into captivity, to seek the peace of the city, whither they were carried, and to pray unto the LORD for it, for in the peace thereof, they should have peace; how much more under the fostering care of a christian government, are those duties enforced? Jeremiah 29:7.

ROMANS 13:11-14

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. (12) The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of

light. (13) Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. (14) But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.

There would be a considerable difficulty in the right apprehension of what the Apostle here saith, of awakening out of sleep, if he had not in the preceding part of this Epistle sufficiently shewn, that the Church was not only in an awakened state, but in a truly converted and justified state before GOD. But, beheld in this point of view, all difficulty is at once removed, and the words of the Apostle, in those few verses, appear in all the loveliness of exhortation to the Church of GOD. The sleep which the Apostle had in view, is that sleep too common among believers, to which GOD's dear children are but too much addicted. Not the sleep of death, for they have passed from death unto life. *You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins:* Ephesians 2:1. But it means a sleepy, drowsy frame of mind, such as the Church complained of, and out of which the LORD called her, Song of Solomon 5:2, see Commentary there. The *wise*, virgins, as well as the *foolish*, are described as fallen into a state of sleep while the bridegroom tarried, Matthew 25:5, see Commentary also. If I detain the Reader over the view of the Apostle's words, it shall only be to observe, that the Church of GOD in all ages hath been but too often discovered in this state; and, perhaps, in none more than in the present. And, therefore, if with an eye to the account, as here stated by the Apostle, we consider *the high time Paul* mentions, of *awakening out of sleep*, as if personally directed by the HOLY GHOST to each child of GOD, to whom this *Poor Man's*

Commentary may come, I shall hope the LORD will commission it to usefulness.

Every child of GOD, though in a justified state before GOD, in the blood and righteousness of JESUS CHRIST, may be said to be in a sleepy, drowsy frame of soul, when grace is not in lively exercise, and the goings forth upon the Person, and blood, and righteousness of the LORD JESUS CHRIST are not continual. Time was, when the Day-spring from on high first dawned upon the soul, and the light of the knowledge of the glory of GOD first shone in the face of JESUS CHRIST; that his name was as the richest ointment poured forth. The soul ran, yea, fled to CHRIST, like as on *the chariots of Amminadib*. And the heart was prompted to ask of ail we met, *saw ye him whom my soul loveth?* If this be not the case now, is it not because a sleepiness is crept into the soul? If the bread of life is not daily sought for with the same keen desire as before, can any thing be plainer, than that the appetite is wanting? Reader! what view have you of this state of the case? Certainly if you and I do not feel our daily need of JESUS, yea, if a sense of our wants, and his all-sufficiency to supply, do not make him increasingly precious, somewhat is sadly out of tune in the heart. Though rooted in CHRIST, yet it is a wintry season, when the branches have neither leaves nor fruit. This was the charge which the LORD brought himself against his Church at *Ephesus*. Though the LORD knew her works, and her labor, and her patience, and bore testimony to her as his; yet, JESUS charged her with coldness. She had not lost *all* love to Him, but she had left her *first* love, Revelation 2:1-7. Oh! my poor heart! What reproach is it, that He to whom I owe so much, should have so little of my affections! And, while I

need him more, should manifest that love less! Reader! Is it your case? If so, is it not as *Paul* saith, *high time to awake out of sleep?*

But let us go one step further. From whence doth this spring, and where is the seat of the disease? Very plain it is, that the mind revolts at it, and the regenerated soul is continually reproaching itself in consequence thereof. The child of God feels evident principles of a different nature and tendency within him. *The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.* Like *Paul*, *with the mind we serve the law of GOD, but with the flesh the law of sin.* So that there are two I's in every renewed man's nature. There is the I which serves the law of GOD. And there is the I which serves the law of sin. And painful and humbling as this review is, yet is it a blessed discovery, and which can never be made but by the SPIRIT'S teaching. The carnal, unawakened, unregenerated man knows it not; yea, indeed, it is impossible he should, for he feels it not, neither doth it exist in him. His spiritual part is unawakened, but remains as he was born, dead in trespasses and sins. So that there is no conflict in his heart. A *dead* soul can make no opposition to a *living* body, wholly employed under one form or other, in making *provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.* It is only when by the quickening and regenerating influences of the HOLY GHOST, the soul, which by nature is dead in trespasses and sins, is brought forth into life, that the warfare begins, and which never ends until the body drops into the grave.

Reader! do not dismiss the subject without taking with you the suitable improvements from it. There is much in it to humble the best and most faithful followers of the LORD. And

there are some things connected with it, which under grace, may lead to other improvements. Let me beg my Reader's indulgence to offer a few words upon each. In the first place, there is much to humble the child of GOD, both before GOD, and to his own heart, when he beholds in himself those remains of indwelling corruption, and that he carries about with him such a body of sin and death, which harrass and afflict the soul. What poverty, what leanness in spiritual enjoyments it occasions! How barren are ordinances, when grace is low, and corruption high? The heart is like a captive in prison, when neither a sense of sin, nor of mercy, for the time, affects. A sense of want will quicken the desire; and when GOD the HOLY GHOST creates an hungering in the soul, and spreads JESUS with his banquet open to view, every thing is blessed then in the enjoyment. But, when the LORD the Comforter is away, and the soul asleep; means of grace, though still followed, degenerate into a mere form; and, however the shadow remains, the substance is wanting. Moreover, the evil of this drowsiness is not confined to the person of the child of GOD only, which is under its distressing influence, the whole Church is injured by it, CHRIST is dishonored, and, not unfrequently, occasion is afforded thereby for the enemy to blaspheme. *While men slept*, saith JESUS, (in that beautiful parable of the good seed,) *the enemy sowed tares*. And to what cause so likely is it in the present hour, that we can ascribe the awful heresies which have sprung up among us, even *to the denying of the LORD that bought them*; as the lukewarm, indifferent spirit, which hath been manifested in the Churches, to the great and distinguishing doctrines of our most holy faith? That temporizing conduct, that wish to avoid giving offence, that

endeavour to make the iron and the clay join, in, bringing together men of the most opposite principles, under the specious pretext of promoting the LORD'S glory, by propagating his holy word; while concealing and keeping in the back ground an open profession of some of his most blessed truths, which truly honor him; what are all these, but some of the sad, sad consequences of a sleepy state of the Church, instead of casting off, and having no fellowship with the works of darkness, but as true soldiers of JESUS CHRIST, *putting on the whole armor of light ?*

But I said, there are some things connected with this view of a sleepy frame in the Church, or in any individual of the Church, which, under grace, may lead to other improvements. And I will beg to mention a few of them. And, *first*. Nothing can be more evident, than that one gracious purpose, which the LORD intended from it is, to make *sin appear exceeding sinful* No man, no angel, no, nor all the creatures of GOD, can tell, what sin is; or have they any adequate conceptions of its awfulness. The child of God therefore shall be taught, and feelingly taught too, somewhat of its dreadful nature, from the remains of in-bred and in-dwelling corruption in himself; and as the Prophet saith, *thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the LORD, thy GOD, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the LORD GOD of hosts,* Jeremiah 2:19.

Secondly. This consciousness of a body of in-bred, in-dwelling sin, from which the soul, though renewed by grace, cannot

disentangle itself, neither will be able, until life is over, serves, under grace, to keep open a constant spring of true sorrow and repentance in the heart. *Paul* the Apostle, though he had been caught up to the third heaven, and was himself a chosen vessel before God; yet was so sensible of this distressed state, that he went in great mourning of heart. *Oh! wretched man that I am, (said he,) who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?* Romans 5:24. It is very blessed to have *the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in GOD which raiseth the dead,* 2 Corinthians 1:9.

Thirdly. Perhaps there is hardly a cause, which relates to the state of the redeemed soul, groaning under the remains of corruption, more striking to shew, how the LORD overrules evil for good, than when by this process the believer is divorced from all self-righteousness. Nothing but the continual humblings of sin under grace, can accomplish this blessed purpose. We are so wedded to some fancied goodness in our poor fallen nature, that it requires frequent mortifications from human infirmities, to teach us what we are. And very blessed it is, when humbled to the dust before GOD, to be rooted out of it. The child of GOD is living nearer to the LORD, when humbled for some renewed instance of infirmity, than when lifted up, in some fancied work of self-righteousness. And far better is he that is made watchful and jealous over his own heart, by reason of conscious sin, than he that is made proud and secure in fancying himself something when he is nothing.

But *fourthly,* and above all. Whatever tends to endear CHRIST, and enhance to the soul the preciousness of JESUS, must be

blessed. And, what can accomplish this purpose more, than a sense of our daily, momentarily need of him? Precious LORD! let me be any thing, or nothing, yea, worse than nothing, so that my soul be humbled and my GOD be exalted as the LORD my righteousness! Oh! for grace *to win CHRIST, and to be found in him: not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of CHRIST; the righteousness which is of GOD by faith!* Philippians 3:8-9.

Reader! it will be blessed, if your soul, and my soul, be taught, to mourn in secret, over a nature, which in its highest attainments, is still the subject of sin. And do not forget, how much we owe to grace, in thus having brought us acquainted with ourselves, to hide pride from our eyes! And, how blessed it is in GOD, to give us grace, to acknowledge before GOD, those remaining corruptions. And, let me beg the Reader to mark it down, as an unerring rule of grace in the heart, when we are led to see our corruptions, and to acknowledge them. But for grace, we should not have known them. Blessed be GOD! that while we are led to see, and know, and feel, what poor creatures we are in ourselves; we are led to see, and know, and enjoy also, our interest in JESUS. Oh! the preciousness of that holy Scripture: *Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound? that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.*

REFLECTIONS

SURELY the good order of society, and the general peace of states and kingdoms, are promoted, by wise laws, and

regulations; and happy the nation, who hath the LORD for their GOD.

But, my soul! as thou art looking for a city which hath foundation, whose Builder and Maker is GOD; be thou on the watch tower, for the LORD's coming. And, aware that to thee the night of this wilderness-state is far spent, and the day of the immortal world is at hand, which like the tide of a vast ocean is hastening to cover over the whole earth; oh! for grace to be weaned from all things here below, and to be ready at a moment's warning to mount up and meet the LORD in the air. Blessed LORD JESUS! be it my happiness, to be found waiting! And may GOD the SPIRIT put on CHRIST, and his righteousness on my soul, that when my LORD shall come, *I may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

CHAPTER 14

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To avoid unnecessary Contentions in the Church, from the Custom Jews and Gentiles, the Apostle directs this Chapter to the mutual Accommodation of each, in Things of small Moment.

ROMANS 14:1-3

Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. (2) For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. (3) Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

We shall derive great improvement from what is here said, with an eye to the spirit of accommodation, in things of small moment between Jew and Gentile, if we take occasion therefrom, to make use of the same kind of reasoning, in the circumstances which concern the weaker and humbler Christian. There are great diversities of gifts, the Apostle saith, in the Church; but it is the same SPIRIT, *who divideth to every man severally as he will*, 1 Corinthians 12:11. And there cannot be a more beautiful or engaging character in life, whether minister, or people, than the man who kindly and affectionately accommodates himself to the several situations of those in the Church, with whom he hath to do. For it is a point, which should never be lost sight of, that all the souls of the redeemed are equally dear to CHRIST. And, what is equally dear to Him, should be also equally dear to every one of his members. To bear with their infirmities, to watch over their weaknesses, to be gentle and forbearing, and in every department, to manifest the SPIRIT of CHRIST, while professing to be under the influence of CHRIST, is a blessed testimony of belonging to CHRIST; or, as Scripture beautifully expresses it: *strengthening the weak hands, and confirming the feeble knees*, Isaiah 35:4.

ROMANS 14:4-8

Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. (5) One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. (6) He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. (7) For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. (8) 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.

I pass by the several circumstances related within these verses, interesting as they are, to call the Reader's attention to what the Apostle hath said, of the lives of GOD's people not being to themselves, but to the LORD; and their deaths the same. And to be sure, nothing can be more blessed, than the consideration. If there was no other passage in the word of GOD, in confirmation of the union and oneness between CHRIST and his people than this; the glorious truth, as it is here expressed, would be a full testimony. The Church of CHRIST, and every individual of that Church, hath life in CHRIST, and that from all eternity. And what comes *from* CHRIST, must lead *to* and terminate *in* CHRIST. They have their being *in* him, they derive all *from* him, they live *to* him: and in their departure, they die not as others die who die out of CHRIST, for they *sleep in* JESUS. So the Apostle expresses it, 1 Thessalonians 4:14. And the voice John heard from heaven, when pronouncing them blessed, declared this as the cause of their blessedness: *they die in the* LORD. Revelation 14:13. Every one of the seed of CHRIST, is part of CHRIST. CHRIST and his seed are one. For, saith the Apostle, speaking of the Church, *we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*, Ephesians 5:30. Reader! do not lose sight of it, for it is most precious! And see to it, that there be a correspondence in every part of conversation. He that liveth *to* the LORD, liveth *on* the LORD, making CHRIST *the all in all*; living to him, by lively actings of faith, upon his Person, blood, and righteousness: such will die *in* the LORD. For GOD the FATHER'S Covenant love and faithfulness, GOD the SON'S finished redemption, and GOD the SPIRIT'S life-giving power; these are

the same in life and death: and as the faithful live, so they die, *rejoicing in hope of the glory of God*.

ROMANS 14:9-16

For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. (10) But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. (11) For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. (12) So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. (13) Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. (14) I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. (15) But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. (16) Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

I cannot forego the pleasure it gives me, in calling the Reader's attention to that sweet Scripture, which so blessedly speaks, of the great end and purpose of all CHRIST'S ministry upon earth, for his people. *For to this end*, (saith Paul,) CHRIST *both died, and rose and revived, that he might be LORD both of the dead and living*. Precious JESUS! what proofs are here of thine unequalled love to thy Church? Thou art indeed, and justly so, the LORD of all; reigning in all, and through all the departments of nature, providence, grace, and glory. Eternal, Almighty, and Everlasting Monarch! *Thy dead men shall live*. Yea, thou wilt raise the dead in trespasses and sins, to the life of grace here: And, thou wilt raise the dead in CHRIST, to the life of glory hereafter. Blessed JESUS! And wilt thou not raise my soul now, during all the time-state of the Church, to be above all my dying frames and dead affections? Art thou not,

LORD, risen and revived, that thou mightest be LORD both of dead and living ? Oh! for grace, daily to hear thy gracious and all-powerful voice saying : *I am the resurrection and the life! he that believeth in me, though he where dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die!* John 11:25-26.

ROMANS 14:17-21

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. (18) For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. (19) Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. (20) For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offense. (21) It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

What a very precious Scripture this is, in conclusion of what had been said, concerning all the controversies of meat and drink? *The Kingdom of GOD is not meal and drink.* Here we have the decision. *Meat commendeth us not to GOD: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse,* 1 Corinthians 8:8. How everlastingly disposed the minds of men have been, in taking up with any thing short of the change of heart! This throws to the ground every attempt of compromise with GOD. Nothing short of the work of GOD the SPIRIT in regeneration, can bring sinners to GOD. It is the special, and peculiar office of GOD the HOLY GHOST, to effect this blissful change. He *convinceth of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.* And, by holding up to the sinner's view, the Person, work, and glory of CHRIST, and

working in the sinner's heart, faith to believe the record GOD hath given of his SON; he gives grace, to possess an interest, in all the communicable rights of the LORD JESUS, which he wrought for his people; and thus renders the kingdom of grace here, leading to a kingdom of glory hereafter, the privilege of the whole Church. Reader! doth your experience correspond with the Apostle's, and is this kingdom in your esteem, *righteousness, and peace, and joy in the HOLY GHOST*? If so, sweet to the soul is the testimony of GOD the SPIRIT by the Apostle. *For he that in these things serveth CHRIST, is acceptable to GOD, in the beloved, and approved of men!*

ROMANS 14:22-23

Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. (23) And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

I only detain the Reader at the last clause of this Chapter, to observe, in what a tone of the most solemn decision, the LORD declares by his servant, that *whatsoever is not of faith is sin*. We have a strong expression elsewhere, of the importance of faith, in the sight of GOD, when it is said, that *without faith it is impossible to please GOD*, Hebrews 11:6. But here, the want of it is said to be sin. And what becomes of the multitude of services, alms-givings, charities, and benevolent institutions, unfounded in faith? According to this Scripture, it is not enough to say, they have no claims to divine favor; but they are exposed to divine wrath. *For whatsoever is not of faith is sin*, According to this statement, (and let it be remembered it is scriptural,) there can be nothing to escape the LORD's displeasure, however specious it may appear to men, but what is undertaken with an eye to GOD in CHRIST. Every act of

the creature, as the act of a sinful creature, must partake of sin. And, it is by faith only in CHRIST, that the iniquity of our most holy things are done away, Exodus 28:38. But, if there be no respect to CHRIST in any act and faith of acceptance in Him, it is sin: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Perhaps it may be said, that upon this statement, all the high sounding deeds of thousands, which have filled the world with their praises, and their monuments, will come to nothing. No doubt they will. But it is not enough, according to this Scripture, merely to say, that they will come to nothing; for if they be found unfounded in CHRIST, they will be proved to be sin. And what a reverse of circumstances will take place at the great day of decision: while many who have given almost their body to be burned on the score of charity, but without faith in CHRIST, will be found in their very alms-deed in sin; many who have given nothing because they have had nothing to give, but the prayer of faith; will be then acknowledged, as the poor woman was by CHRIST when on earth, to have given a costly offering. Reader! may you and I have grace, to form a right estimate in all things. *Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*

REFLECTIONS

READER! In all the circumstances of life we may well bear with the weak in faith, and receive none to doubtful disputations, while earnest in the grand points of the cross to contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints. In meats, and drinks, and inventions of men, and carnal ordinances, there is nothing worth contending for. But while all outward things, though they make a great shew of will-worship, satisfy the unawakened; let it be my pursuit, the things of inward peace.

For the LORD'S kingdom *is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the HOLY GHOST*. Blessed LORD JESUS! grant that my life may be a life of faith on thee; and then will my death, be a death of security in thee; for living, or dying, I shall be thine. And to all the lesser circumstances of life, may my walk through the world, in the unavoidable intercourses of it, be conducted with love to thy people from love to thee. Never to wound one of CHRIST'S little ones here below, much less to destroy his comfort, though nothing can destroy his everlasting happiness for whom CHRIST died. And do thou, dearest LORD, grant me increasing faith in thee, since all, and every act, without an eye to thee, and thy righteousness, is sin.

CHAPTER 15

CONTENTS

The Apostle exhorts the strong in Faith, to bear the Infirmities of the weak. He recommends the Example of JESUS, and concludes with recommending the Church to the GOD of Peace.

ROMANS 15:1-7

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. (2) Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. (3) For even Christ pleased not himself: but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. (4) For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. (5) Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: (6) That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (7) Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

It is always blessed to eye CHRIST. And, in the use the Apostle here makes of the LORD'S example, as not seeking self pleasing in ease and enjoyment, but JEHOVAH'S glory, and his Church's welfare, there is somewhat very blessed, and interesting. It would be well for the Church, if the lovely pattern of the Great Head and Husband of his people were always in view. Both the strong and the weak, the old and the young, the rich and the poor, in the LORD'S household, would find constant blessedness, in taking CHRIST for their example. It is said, that even CHRIST *pleased not himself*. By which is not meant, that CHRIST'S pleasure, differed from the FATHER'S. For one and the same mind was in both. JESUS, ages before he openly tabernacled in substance of our flesh, when speaking of the SPIRIT of prophecy, said: *I delight to do thy will, O my GOD; yea, thy law is within my heart*. Or, as the words are rendered in the margin of the Bible, *in the midst of my bowels*; meaning, as wrapped up in his Very nature; so much oneness being between them, Psalm 40:8. But, by *not pleasing himself*, is intended to shew, that in the accomplishment of the great purpose for which he came upon earth, he had the great object in view of the FATHER'S glory, and his people's happiness. And nothing of self-accommodation or ease was considered by the LORD JESUS, while in the pursuit of these important designs. And, among many instances which might have been produced in confirmation of it, (for CHRIST'S whole life was a life of suffering,) *Paul* brings forward one, which the Scripture noticed concerning CHRIST, and which in its bosom comprehended many others: *but as it is written, the*

reproaches of them that reproached the fell on me. Now this was happily chosen by the Apostle, in the illustration of this great point, as well as to open to the Church, other important views of CHRIST. For these are the words of CHRIST himself, addressed to the FATHER, spoken by the SPIRIT of prophecy; and serve as a key, to open to the Church the whole Psalm, from whence *Paul* makes the quotation of them. I beg the Reader before he proceeds further, for his confirmation in this interesting point, to turn to Psalm 69; and by comparing what is there said, with other Scriptures, he will be led to conclude, that CHRIST is the sole Speaker, through the whole of it. And a most blessed proof the whole brings to *the truth as it is in JESUS*. Compare verse 9 (Psalm 69:9) with John 2:17; Psalm 119:139. Compare verse 4 (Psalm 69:4) with John 15:25 and Psalm 35:19. Compare verse 3 (Psalm 69:3), with John 14:28, Psalm 119:82, and Psalm 119:123. Compare Psalm 69:21 with Matthew 27:34 and Matthew 27:48. But, when the Reader hath diligently examined those Scriptures, let him not turn away from the passage *Paul* hath here quoted, before that he hath first considered a little more particularly, the blessedness of it. The *reproaches* which the LORD JESUS had in contemplation when he thus expressed himself, no doubt, in the first, and principal sense, had respect to JEHOVAH; and which CHRIST, by the humiliation of himself, and his sacrifice on the cross, came on earth to do away. The Church of GOD, as well as the whole of mankind, in the *Adam*-nature of a fallen state, had reproached God, His holy name, his attributes, his law, his sanctuary; all had been blasphemed, and polluted. When, therefore, JESUS came to do away sin by the sacrifice of himself; these reproaches were charged upon CHRIST, as the

Church's representative and surety, Isaiah 53:6. . And, it was in the view of this blasphemy and prophanation of the LORD in the temple, which gave occasion for CHRIST to manifest his zeal for his FATHER'S honor, when he drave the buyers and sellers before him; and brought to mind to the Apostles this very Scripture, John 2:15-17. But GOD the FATHER was also *reproached*, as well as CHRIST'S own Person, when He, whom GOD had declared by a voice from heaven, to be his beloved SON, was charged with blasphemy, a glutton, a winebibber, the friend of publicans and sinners, and as having a devil GOD was reproached in the first instance in all these, and the reproaches fell also upon CHRIST. And all the *reproaches* of CHRIST'S people, in their sins and iniquities, which justly became their reproach, fell on CHRIST; that is, were put upon CHRIST. He, as the head of his body the Church, bore the whole in his own body on the tree, *when he died the just for the unjust to bring us unto GOD*, 1 Peter 3:18. Then it was, as the Almighty Speaker said, in the sweet Psalm before quoted; *I restored that which I took not away*. Psalm 69:4. Reader! all these precious things, and no doubt much more are included, in what *Paul* hath here noticed, of the reproaches which fell on CHRIST. Judge you then, with what a fullness of propriety, might he recommend the strong in faith, to accommodate themselves to their weaker brethren; when this strong One, this *Gheber* of his Church, *endured such a contradiction of sinners against himself* that his redeemed should not *be wearied nor faint in their minds*, Psalm 89:19; Jeremiah 31:22, Hebrews 12:3.

Largely as I have trespassed in looking at this most interesting portion of Scripture, I must not suffer the Reader

to depart from it, without first taking with him, the blessed conclusion the Apostle hath made of it: because it not only is applicable in the present instance, but in every other, where GOD the HOLY GHOST leads his servants to make quotations from his holy word, in confirmation of his doctrines. The Apostle saith, that *whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.* And the Apostle adds a prayer, that these blessed effects might follow in the Church. Now then, from hence we are authorized, as from many other parts of Scripture to conclude, that the whole body of the divine word, as well as the prophecy of Scripture, is not *of any private interpretation*, 2 Peter 1:20. Every part and portion of it, is given with the express view, under the Almighty Author's teaching, to make the Church wise unto salvation, through the faith which is in CHRIST JESUS. And GOD the HOLY GHOST, from the continual and unceasing ministry of it, in his Church, is to bring the Church acquainted more and more, with the Person, character, offices, work, and glory, of her right lawful LORD. And these great objects, GOD the HOLY GHOST is continually accomplishing, in the hearts of the LORD's redeemed ones, by his gracious ministry. Reader! are you acquainted with these things? do you give yourself wholly to them in the concerns of salvation? Is CHRIST in your view, all and in all? If so, it is the LORD the HOLY GHOST, which is your Teacher. For both by his personal Ministry, as JESUS declared of him, (John 14:16-17.) and by his written word, he it is, the LORD which *teacheth you to profit.* And you yourself become a living witness to this very Scripture, that the GOD of patience and consolation hath caused these things to be written for

your learning, that you *through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

ROMANS 15:8-13

Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: (9) And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. (10) And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. (11) And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. (12) And again, Isaiah saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust. (13) Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

There is somewhat very striking in what the Apostle here saith of our LORD, when he calls him, a *Minister of the circumcision*. He was indeed a Minister. For, as he saith himself, he came *not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*, Matthew 20:28. Reader! have you ever considered the grace and condescension of the LORD JESUS, in taking this humble title? Fallen as we are in the world, into the very dregs of time, the ministry is considered as only suited for the humbler capacities of men. It is almost an adage with some, when providing as they call it for their younger branches: "Any thing will do for a Parson." Awful proofs of awful times. As if the care of souls was of the smallest concern in the world. JESUS the SON of GOD, had different views. *Paul* his servant, esteemed it his highest honor. *I thank JESUS our LORD* (said he) *who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry*, 1 Timothy 1:12. Yea, GOD himself hath honored the ministry, above all employments.

For his only SON, the brightness of his FATHER'S glory, and the express image of his Person; heir of all things, and by whom he made the worlds: Him he made a Minister.

By a minister of the *circumcision*, we are not to apprehend is meant, that CHRIST administered circumcision to any; though for the purpose of redeeming his Church from the curse of the law, he himself was circumcised, that he might become a debtor to fulfil the law, which he did. But I rather conceive, that the reason wherefore CHRIST is called *a minister of the circumcision*, is in a spiritual sense, and what *Paul* elsewhere calls: *we are the circumcision which worship GOD in spirit, and rejoice in CHRIST JESUS, and have no confidence in the flesh*, Philipians 3:3. CHRIST therefore is himself the minister of the circumcision: to shew, that both Jew and Gentile in him, are alike interested in the whole work of salvation. And indeed, the quotations which the Apostle makes from several Scriptures, seem to be intended to confirm this view of CHRIST, Psalm 18:49; Genesis 17:7; 2 Samuel 23:1-5; Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalm 117:1.

I admire the gracious benediction with which the Apostle closeth this paragraph, for the consolation of the Church, in all ages. And, it is not only most blessedly timed, after what the Apostle had before said of the Gentiles, but also most sweetly worded, with an eye to CHRIST, whose well-known character is, that He *is the hope of Israel and SAVIOR thereof*, Jeremiah 14:8. *The GOD of hope!* as if in direct opposition to those, *who having no hope, are without GOD in the world*, Ephesians 2:12. And there is a very great blessedness in the prayer, or invocation, on another account also; because the whole Three Persons of the GODHEAD are considered in it. For,

as CHRIST is the hope of Israel, and the SAVIOR thereof: so, GOD the FATHER hath given the Church everlasting consolation, and a good hope, through grace. And all the aboundings of hope are the immediate work and agency of GOD the HOLY GHOST. Reader! shall not you and I put our hearty Amen, to this sweet, and affectionate prayer of the Apostle; and beg of GOD for the unceasing aboundings of all joy, and peace, in believing through GOD the HOLY GHOST?

ROMANS 15:14-29

And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. (15) Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, (16) That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. (17) I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. (18) For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, (19) Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. (20) Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: (21) But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand. (22) For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. (23) But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; (24) Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. (25) But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. (26) For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. (27) It hath pleased

them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. (28) When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. (29) And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

I pass over the whole of *Paul's* account of himself, and of his pro-posed journey, for the sake of shortness. But I detain the Reader at this verse, to make a short observation on the assurance he had, that when he came to the Church, he should come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of CHRIST. It *is* very sweet and blessed to those who minister in holy things, when from the LORD'S impression upon their own souls, they have strong faith, that the LORD will make their labors blessed to others also. *Paul* knew, that he had an interest in their prayers. And his own heart had been led out in prayer for them. And hence he drew the well-founded conclusion: I know and am sure that when I come unto you, *I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of CHRIST*, Reader! depend upon it, the same holds good in every age of the Church. When a faithful minister and servant of CHRIST, hath his soul frequently led out in prayer for the people, and the people are frequently led out in soul prayer for him; the LORD will bless, and doth bless, both minister and people. And the heart of the poorest minister is encouraged, when he knoweth that he there lives in the affections of the people; and that they are daily going to Court to remember him, and his poor services, to the King. And the thought of this, that the people are at prayer for him, gives a lift to his soul when he hardly knows how to pray for himself. *Paul* knew that he should come in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of CHRIST when he came to *Rome*, for his heart was

there: and GOD *was his witness, that without ceasing, he was always making mention of them in his prayers*, Romans 1:9-10. And the LORD had bid him be of good cheer, for he must bear witness of Him at *Rome*, Acts 23:11. It is truly blessed to be thus borne up on the wings of faith, and prayer, before the LORD!

ROMANS 15:30-33

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; (31) That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; (32) That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. (33) Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

There is somewhat very sweet and gracious in this earnest appeal of *Paul* to the Church. He was closing up his Epistle, which contained in its bosom, more or less, all the great leading truths of the Gospel of CHRIST. He had shewn them, the momentous doctrines of the Church, in which he himself was established, and which he affectionately recommended to them. And now in the end, he leaves the whole impression upon their minds, under the grace of GOD, in this sweet form of words: *Now I beseech you brethren, for the LORD JESUS CHRIST'S sake, and for the love of the SPIRIT, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to GOD for me*. And he adds, that he seeks an interest in their prayers, to be delivered from the enemies of the truth, and to be made a blessing to the friends: and that coming to them by the will of GOD, both himself and them might be mutually refreshed. And he prays the GOD of peace to be with them all. Amen.

Every word in this address of the Apostle hath signification. It is *Paul*, the prisoner of CHRIST for the Gentiles, which thus beseecheth the Church. And though by his Apostolical authority, he might have commanded what he requests: yet he rather makes it the subject of entreaty. We behold him as on the knee of supplication appearing before them. And, to enforce what he entreated yet more, he adds the endearing name of *brethren*. Now j Church as to give himself for it; and in whose sight, every individual member of his mystical body was alike dear. And as the love of the HOLY GHOST, became the grand cementing cause of all union, and all joy and peace in believing, whereby the brethren were made blessed in the enjoyment of GOD the FATHER'S favor, and GOD the SON'S grace; the Apostle brings this also into the account, as forming together the full assurance of divine mercy. Reader! do not overlook the affection of *Paul* for the Church; neither the earnestness of his labors for them. But yet more particularly mark, where the Apostle placed his great confidence, and from whence alone he looked for success. His services could only be blessed of GOD, and accepted of men, when he came to them by the will of GOD, and GOD refreshed them together. And the Apostle closeth in prayer, that the GOD of peace might be with them, in proof of it. *The GOD of peace*, is a comprehensive expression, to denote the Covenant of peace in CHRIST, in which all the Persons of the GODHEAD have concurred. And where this is, all other Covenant blessings follow, and the *Amen*, or verily, as one of the names of CHRIST, is added, as the signing, sealing, and delivery of deeds, to confirm the free-grace deed of GOD in CHRIST. *He that blesseth himself in the earth, shall bless himself in the GOD of truth*; that is, CHRIST, the Amen, Isaiah 15:16. And the

blessing in heaven, is confirmed in the same way, in the blessing of the Amen, *the faithful and true witness*, both in heaven and earth, Revelation 3:14.

REFLECTIONS

READER! let you and I seek for grace everlastingly to have in view the Person of JESUS. Nothing will tend to endear us more to our weaker brethren, and prompt us to be gentle and affectionate towards them, as when, under GOD the SPIRIT'S glorifying CHRIST to our view, we behold his gentleness and meekness to his redeemed, in the days of our LORD'S flesh, what reproaches he endured, and what unequalled grace and humility he manifested under all. Lamb of GOD! let a portion of thy meek SPIRIT be upon me, and upon all thy Church and people!

Almighty Author of thy Holy Scriptures, let the sweet savor of thy word be always uppermost in my heart. Let me never lose sight of thy love, thou gracious GOD the SPIRIT, in that thou hast caused whatsoever things were written aforetime, to be written for our learning. LORD! may I esteem thy word more than my necessary food! And do thou, O GOD of hope, fill my soul with all joy and peace in believing, that I may abound in hope, through the power of the HOLY GHOST.

And do thou, glorious GOD and FATHER! who art the GOD of peace; and in proof of it didst bring again from the dead our LORD JESUS, that great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, be with all; thy people and thy Churches alway, to confirm them to the end. Yea, Almighty GOD! do thou establish them in thy truth, and make

the blessed word of thy servants mutually refreshing, both to ministers and people. Amen.

CHAPTER 16

CONTENTS

This Chapter, which closeth the Epistle, is chiefly Greetings and Salutations to certain Persons of the Church, known to the Apostle. Paul closeth the whole with ascribing Praise and Glory to GOD.

ROMANS 16:1-7

I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: (2) That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succorer of many, and of myself also. (3) Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: (4) Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. (5) Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ. (6) Greet Mary, who bestowed much labor on us. (7) Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

I do not think it necessary, in a work of this kind, to amplify the pages, in dwelling upon the characters *Paul* hath here given testimony to, of their faith in CHRIST. Much no doubt might be said, of honor to them, and of profit to ourselves. But I must forego that pleasure. One point at the close of those verses, I would beg the Reader to notice, in order to guard against any misapprehension; I mean, when speaking of some which were of note among the Apostles, he saith:

who also were in CHRIST before me. By which we are to understand, that they were brought into a saving acquaintance with CHRIST before that *Paul* was. Nothing more can be implied than this. For as to the being in CHRIST, and the well-being in CHRIST, the whole Church were so together, and that before all worlds. *Known unto GOD are all his works, from the beginning of the world,* Acts 15:18. It forms one of the most blessed of all truths, that the Church was *chosen in CHRIST before the foundation of the world,* Ephesians 1:4. And, from that moment in eternity, be that moment called by whatsoever name it may, in which to the infinite mind of JEHOVAH CHRIST stood up, as the Head, and Husband of his Church; every individual member of his mystical body, as the body

and spouse of CHRIST, must have stood up with him. So that, in the secret decree, fore-knowledge, and fore-appointment of GOD, all CHRIST'S members were alike in CHRIST together; as his seed, his children, his offspring, Proverbs 8:22-31. All alike at one time given by the FATHER. All alike covenanted for, and engaged for, by GOD the SON. And all equally beloved in CHRIST by GOD the SPIRIT, from the beginning; though his great work of regeneration, remained to be accomplished, in the several ages of the Church, as appointed. The being in CHRIST therefore before *Paul*, was in allusion to the time of this glorious act of regeneration wrought in their being quickened who were before in the *Adam*-nature of a fallen state dead in trespasses and sins. And in this sense, it was a blessed thing to be early called; and to be brought from darkness and the shadow of death. Thousands of transgressions are thereby cut short. And *Paul* was ready to

give them the birth-right of honor. No doubt it melted his heart to consider, how the LORD had distinguished them with this sweet grace of conversion, when he was blaspheming and causing the LORD to serve with his sins, and wearying him with his iniquities. All this was cause for blessing the LORD for his distinguishing mercy. But, in relation to an union with CHRIST, and being in CHRIST, here there could be no precedency. The first sinner awakened by grace, whether *Adam, Eve, or Abel*; and the last sinner of the *Adam* race, which is yet unborn in nature, and consequently unborn in grace; were all alike secretly in CHRIST, chosen in CHRIST, beloved in CHRIST, and interested in all that belongs to CHRIST, as the CHRIST of GOD, and Head of his body the Church, from the beginning, and before all worlds.

ROMANS 16:8-16

Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord. (9) Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. (10) Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household. (11) Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord. (12) Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labor in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which labored much in the Lord. (13) Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. (14) Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them. (15) Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them. (16) Salute one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

I stop the Reader at this last verse of the paragraph, just to remark a few words, in relation to an holy kiss. It was the custom in those eastern countries, for friends and relations to salute one another with various outward marks of affection. The *Abba Father* was never used by slaves to the *Ab*, or Head

of the family. This privilege belonged only to children. In like manner the kiss, was a general token of love and reverence, or of equality. The brethren of CHRIST, his Church, his people, had their love-tokens also to manifest their affection, and attachment to each other. But *Paul*, taught by the HOLY GHOST, instructs the Church, to shew their love, not simply by a kiss, but an *holy* kiss. Perhaps recollecting the *traitorous* kiss of *Judas*. And also to distinguish it from any thing savoring of a want of chastity. The holy followers of the HOLY JESUS are in every thing to be distinguished from the carnal and ungodly. And if they do in their salutations, use the kiss of brotherly affection, it must be holy, and with an eye to the holy child JESUS!

ROMANS 16:17-20

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. (18) For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. (19) For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. (20) And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

What a refreshment hath this promise been found to thousands! *The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly*. Let the Reader observe the sweetness of it, and the certainty of it. Satan is a subtle foe, a powerful foe, an everlasting foe. But the promise is absolute; he shall be bruised under the feet of the LORD'S people shortly. He is come down with great wrath among the inhabitants of the earth, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time,

Revelation 12:12. But how is he to be conquered, and brought under our feet? The promise doth not give the least encouragement, that any of GOD's redeemed shall subdue him, in any strength of their own, Alas! the strongest of GOD's people, are but as feathers, if left to themselves, to the wind of Satan's temptations. But, the great blessedness of the promise is, that the GOD of peace will do it. And there is another precious part in this promise: when the GOD of peace bruise Satan, it shall be *under our feet*. Sweet consideration! Though you, and I, have nothing to do in the work; yet we have all the blessedness, in the victory. Our GOD will bruise him, and bring him down; but it shall be under our feet. As *Joshua* said to the men of war, which went with him to the holy war: *Come ye near, and put your feet upon the necks of your enemies*: So our Almighty *Joshua* will do by all that war with him, when he brings *Satan* under their feet, *Joshua* 10:24-25. And though the child of GOD, when harrassed with temptations, thinks it a long season, and frequently groans under the exercise, saying: how long shall mine enemy afflict me? yet the LORD saith, *shortly* he will bruise *Satan* under our feet. The LORD doth by his people now, as he did by his people of old, in driving out their enemies before them from *Canaan*. *The LORD thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little. Thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field encrease upon thee. But the LORD thy GOD shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed*, *Deuteronomy* 7:22-23. If the LORD were to destroy Satan at once, and if no foes from within, nor temptations from without, were to exercise the people of GOD; the beasts of the field in a man's own heart, namely,

Spiritual pride, and Pharisaical righteousness, would increase upon him, and be more deadly in evil, than all the other devices of *Satan*. The LORD keeps his people humble therefore, by continually letting them see, and feel, the plague of their own heart. And *Satan*, for this purpose, is not wholly destroyed as yet. Neither at length shall the people of GOD have any hand in his destruction. This is our JESUS'S work, and our JESUS'S sole glory. It is the LORD thy GOD which shall drive all out, and consume all our foes with a mighty destruction, until they are destroyed. Reader! do not, no, not for a moment, lose sight of this sweet promise. *The GOD of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly!*

ROMANS 16:21-27

Timothy my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. (22) I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord. (23) Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother. (24) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. (25) Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, (26) But now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: (27) To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

Reader! do not overlook, how blessedly the Apostle dwells upon the precious words: *the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST!* He repeats it, as if it could not be mentioned (and which it never can) too often. And it is to the same purport, when he folds up the last leaf, in the cover of this blessed Epistle, and saith: *To GOD only wise;* or as *Jude* (for it is to one and the same Person the address is) renders it: *To the only wise GOD*

our SAVIOR! Reader! what think you of these precious, precious things? Who can this only wise GOD, and GOD our SAVIOR be, but He, *in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge?* Colossians 2:3. Is he not all along revealed, as the visible JEHOVAH? Is it not said: *No man hath seen GOD at any time.* But, it is immediately added; *the only begotten SON which is in the bosom of the FATHER; he hath declared him.* John 1:18. He then it is, that hath come forth from the invisibility of JEHOVAH, to make him visible to the Church; in and through the medium of our nature. *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily,* Colossians 2:9. Is he not then the only wise GOD, which both *Paul* and *Jude* here alluded to? Not to the exclusion of the Persons of the FATHER, and the HOLY GHOST, but in common with both, and the visible representation of the whole three Persons. And, Reader! I pray you to turn to the Epistle of *Jude*, and read attentively the whole; and then say, whether all along through the whole of it, the Apostle is not principally speaking of our LORD JESUS CHRIST? He is said to present to himself, the Church as faultless before him. So *Paul* saith, Ephesians 5:23; Philippians 3:20; Titus 2:13. And *Peter* to the same amount, 2 Pet. 1:1. Neither is this act of presentation at the last day ever spoken of in the Scripture, as the act of GOD the FATHER, or of GOD the HOLY GHOST! Can any thing more clearly define the Person, and Office-work of the LORD JESUS CHRIST? Hail thou GOD only wise! FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST! be glory ascribed to thee through the mediation of the GOD-Man JESUS CHRIST for ever. Amen.

REFLECTIONS

MAY the faithful Ministers of CHRIST here learn from *Paul*, how near, and dear, to the heart, must ever lie the Church of CHRIST, when the SPIRIT of CHRIST dwells in the heart. Not content with addressing the whole mystical body of CHRIST, the Apostle here particularly mentions one by one, in name, as members of CHRIST'S body, his flesh, and his bones. Oh! how infinitely more to be valued is this record of CHRIST'S people in the book of GOD, than the being enrolled among all the great ones of the earth.

Reader! do not overlook what *Paul* hath said, in honorable testimony of those, who by awakening, and regenerating grace, were in CHRIST before him. How sweet is early grace! How blessed to know the LORD from our youth! Little children! if peradventure the LORD should, put this *Poor Man's Commentary* in the way of any such, who like *Josiah*, or *Timothy*, have been brought acquainted with the LORD GOD of your fathers from your youth; do not fail to mark and bless GOD for the distinguishing grace! And you no less of upper years, who even like *Paul*, can observe those that were in the knowledge of CHRIST before you; yea, if even at the eleventh hour! Oh! bless GOD for his distinguishing mercy. He that came in at the eleventh hour, was made equal with him which had borne the burden and heat of the day! And why so, but because it is all of free grace. He that is called early, is not called for his deservings. And he that is called late, is called then for GOD'S grace, and not his merit. All is *to the praise of the glory of his grace who hath made us accepted in the beloved*.

And now, for the moment, we take leave of the Apostle. Farewell *Paul!* We have cause to thank thee for thy ministry.

But we bless *Paul's* LORD infinitely more, who appointed it. Oh! for grace, mightly to value and love the servant; but to pass by the servant, and love and adore the Master. Precious JESUS! he is indeed thy minister. Oh! make those sweet writings blessed to the souls of thy people. And may they minister in thine Almighty hand, to all the Churches, to bring glory to the FATHER, SON, and SPIRIT, now, and for ever.

Amen.

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

1 Corinthians

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

THE city of *Corinth*, which formed a part of *Greece*, in the province of *Achaia*, was a place of great opulence. And from its situation on an isthmus, or neck of land to the sea, opened a large source for trade and commerce; and, as is but too common, where opportunities for the indulgences of corrupt nature are found, *Corinth* was remarkable for abounding with luxuries, pride, and uncleanness. To this place, however, GOD the HOLY GHOST in his providence sent *Paul* to preach the Gospel; and the Apostle continued his personal labors in it for about two years. And, as the LORD who sent *Paul* to *Corinth*, had a people there to receive him, so a church was formed during his abode there, while the Apostle went in and out among them.

After his departure, as appears from certain parts here and there in his Epistle, some irregularities crept in among the people; which *Paul* as a watchful minister of CHRIST set about to reform. But beside this, GOD the HOLY GHOST had other views, when guiding the mind and pen of the Apostle, in

dictating this Epistle. The Church of GOD, in every age, hath found cause to bless the HOLY SPIRIT for so precious and invaluable a portion of his sacred word. The interesting account the Apostle hath given of the institution of the Lord's Supper, of Spiritual gifts, and of the Resurrection, (not for the present to mention other subjects treated of by *Paul* in this Epistle,) renders it most blessed indeed!

The *time* in which the apostle wrote it, and sent it to the Church, is not so clearly known, as to determine with exact precision. Some have supposed that it was in the first year of the reign of the emperor *Nero*, which corresponded to the year of our LORD GOD 55. Some place it later. But the chief concern we have, is to know that it was divinely written, under the immediate inspiration of GOD the HOLY GHOST. And this every day's testimony in the hearts of GOD'S people, nourished and refreshed by its gracious contents, abundantly confirm.

I do not think it necessary to detain the Reader with any further preface, but invite him for himself to come and see. Very fully persuaded I am, that, if the Writer of this *Poor Man's Commentary*, and the Reader of it, are both led by the LORD'S hand, while going over this precious book of GOD in the perusal of it, and the same ALMIGHTY LORD which guided *Paul's* pen to write, shall graciously guide our hearts to read the sacred contents; like the man the Apostle speaks of in one of the Chapters of this epistle, *the secrets of our hearts will be made manifest*, as we attend to the ministry of this word, *and falling down on our face, we shall worship GOD, and report that GOD is in it of a truth*. The LORD (if it be his holy will,) vouchsafe this mercy for the LORD JESUS CHRIST'S sake. Amen.

Chapter 1

Contents

The Apostle openeth his Epistle after his usual Manner, with Salutations. He holds up CHRIST, and very blessedly speaks of his Cross.

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

(1) Paul called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother, (2) Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: (3) Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

Several very weighty and important things meet us at the very entrance on this scripture. *Paul*, though called by JESUS himself from darkness to light, would not have thought this a sufficient ordination to the ministry, had he not been called also by the LORD to be an Apostle. He, therefore, in the opening of his Epistle to the *Corinthians*, makes mention of his call to the Apostleship. He joins with himself, in proof of the humbleness of his mind, and his love to the brethren, *Sosthenes*, whom he calls *brother*. We have an account of a *Sosthenes*, Acts 18:17, at that time the chief ruler of the synagogue, If this be one and the same person, (which indeed seems probable, from being of the same place, *Corinth*,) it is likely, that since that period, he had been converted to the faith of the Gospel. But what I beg may be more particularly regarded by the Reader is, the special limitation which this Epistle hath to the Church at *Corinth*.

Paul doth not write to the *Corinthians*, as *Corinthians*; neither to the men of *Corinth* as of a province or place; but to the Church of GOD then in *Corinth*. It is the Church, not the world. And this is most essentially necessary to be kept in view all along, and through every part of this, and all the Epistles. For to the inattention to this important point, is to be ascribed the gross perversion and misapplication of certain passages here and there scattered over the Apostolic writings, in considering them as of *general* meaning, when most evidently they belong, in special reference, only to the Church of GOD, as for example. In this very Epistle, 1 Corinthians 15:22, the Apostle saith, *For us in Adam all die, even so in CHRIST shall all be made alive*. And no truth can be more firm, and certain, and sure, when applied to the faithful in CHRIST JESUS. For, as the Church, as well is the world, is involved in the common death with all mankind, by reason of sin; so by virtue of the Church's union with CHRIST, the church becomes equally interested in the life, which is in, and by CHRIST JESUS. But what hath this to do with the unregenerate and such as have no union with CHRIST JESUS? There must be an union with CHRIST, before we can have communion with CHRIST. The Church, as well as the world, prove our union with Adam, by reason of sin, and as such partake alike in death, which is the sure consequence of sin. And, if we can equally prove our union with CHRIST by regeneration, as we do our oneness with *Adam* by generation; then, and not else, we take to ourselves the blessedness of this scripture: *For as in Adam all die, even so in CHRIST shall all be made alive*. But without this testimony, we have no part nor lot in the matter. I beg that this may be specially noticed by the Reader, according to its vast importance, not only in this place, but through the whole

of the Apostolic writings. It is *to* the Church *Paul* writes. And it is *of* the Church, when speaking of privileges in CHRIST, *Paul* speaks.

But, we must not stop here. The Church is said to be *sanctified in* CHRIST JESUS. What sanctification means, is elsewhere shewn, particularly by *Jude*, when he saith, *sanctified by* GOD *the* FATHER, *preserved in* JESUS CHRIST, *and called*, Jude 1. The Church of GOD in CHRIST hath been sanctified, set apart, chosen, and ordained by GOD the FATHER before the foundation of the world; and these acts of GOD the FATHER in his blessed covenant-offices, included all that related to the Church, during the whole time-state of the Church, until grace is swallowed up in glory. So that CHRIST is made, (as the close of this very chapter expresseth it,) of GOD to the Church, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*: 1 Corinthians 1:30. See also 1 Corinthians 6:11. And what a blessed and comprehensive view doth this sanctification in CHRIST JESUS carry with it, through all the departments of the Church, from *before* the world, *through* the whole period of time, in, and *through* the whole eternal world, to which the Church is hastening?

One word more. The Apostle saith, *Called to be saints*. Yes! For before this call, the Church, though sanctified by GOD the FATHER, and betrothed to GOD the SON, yet being born in the Adam-nature of a sinful, fallen state, is in that state of sin, and must be called out of this state of nature to a state of grace, by the regenerating power of GOD the HOLY GHOST. And until this is done, the Church is not brought into her high privileges, but in every individual instance of CHRIST's mystical body, is living *without* GOD, *and without* CHRIST *in the world*.

But, when this sovereign act of GOD the HOLY GHOST hath passed upon the soul of a poor sinner, and the LORD the SPIRIT hath quickened one of CHRIST'S little ones, whom GOD the FATHER had chosen to holiness in CHRIST before the world began, and whose redemption CHRIST in the time-state of the Church had purchased with his blood; then is the child of GOD *called with an holy calling*, and from an unholy sinner is made an holy saint in CHRIST, and *translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of GOD'S dear SON*, Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9; Colossians 1:13. And this blessed state to which the Church is called, (as the Reader it is to be hoped will perceive,) becomes everlastingly safe and secure, being the joint work, and proceeding from the joint love, purpose, and will, of the whole Persons of the GODHEAD. And, therefore, the Apostle adds, that it is not to the Church of GOD which is in Corinth only, but to all CHRIST'S church, and to every individual member of that Church in every place, who call upon CHRIST, the common glorious Head of his whole Church in heaven and in earth. A sweet intimation by the way, (and let not the Reader overlook it,) of the eternal power and GODHEAD of CHRIST! For the calling upon the LORD JEHOVAH, was made by the Prophet the token of salvation, in the great and terrible day of the LORD). And the *Apostle* not only in this place, but elsewhere, applies this to CHRIST. Compare Joel 2:32 with Romans 10:12-13. And such is the Church of CHRIST. And to such, and such only, Paul sends this Epistle, both theirs, the Church at Corinth, and ours, all CHRIST'S Church in every place, to whom the Apostle sends his usual benediction of grace and peace, which includes the whole blessings of the Covenant from all the Persons of the GODHEAD. So much for the introduction of this beautiful Epistle

of Paul, wrote to the Church by his pen, under the immediate dictation of GOD the HOLY GHOST. And I have been the more particular in the introduction of it, that the Reader might not only see, that it is addressed to the Church of CHRIST, with special reference to the Church, and not to the world; but also, how that Church is known by those blessed marks in those, who in every place as well as Corinth, call upon the name of JESUS CHRIST our LORD, both theirs and ours.

1 Corinthians 1:4-9

(4) I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; (5) That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and *in* all knowledge; (6) Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: (7) So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: (8) Who shall also confirm you unto the end, *that ye may be* blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (9) God *is* faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

What is here said is so plain; as to need no comment; and so very blessed, as when opened to the soul of the regenerate by the HOLY GHOST, as to need no other endearment. Let the Reader look at it again and again, for it will bear reading every day. Observe how the very heart of *Paul* is going forth in love to the Church, while blessing GOD on their account. His very soul seems to be moved in him, as well it might, that in such a place as *Corinth*, CHRIST had a Church. And, observe, how the Apostle expresseth himself on the occasion. I thank my GOD, said he, always on your behalf. And, observe, how he dwells upon the cause of his thanksgiving. It was not for their numbers, among those that professed a belief in CHRIST, in *Corinth*. There might be many there, as it is to be feared is, and hath been in all ages of the Church elsewhere, who

professed to love CHRIST, on whom no change by grace had been wrought. It is not the largeness of a congregation which implies soul prosperity. Great leanness is sometimes found amidst fat pastures of ordinances. *Paul* did not thank his GOD and SAVIOR because they were many, but for the grace of GOD which was given them, and for their being enriched by the LORD, and for the testimony of CHRIST being confirmed in them. Reader! look into your own soul for these things, for it is by these, (and not by outward things,) men live, and in these is the life of the soul. And I pray the Reader not to overlook in this sweet and precious paragraph, how blessedly *Paul* speaks of GOD's faithfulness, and the Church's everlasting safety in him. Oh! what a soul ravishing thought it is, that He who hath called the whole body the Church to an union, and oneness, and fellowship with CHRIST in grace here, gives an earnest and pledge thereby, of the everlasting continuance of that interest, in all CHRIST's communicable glory hereafter. Reader! take it for your daily motto, and wear it in your heart from day to day; *GOD is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his SON JESUS CHRIST our LORD.* The Reader will pardon me; I hope, if I call upon him before he dismisseth this part of the Chapter we have gone over, to take notice with me, how sweetly *Paul* dwells upon the name of his adorable LORD. No less than *ten times*, in the first *ten* verses of this chapter, hath he written his lovely name? He seems to hang upon it, as the bee upon some sweet flower, where the little creature finds so much food for honey, that though he is so laden with what he hath, that he can scarcely fly, yet so much remains, he cannot go away, So *Paul* dwelt upon the very name of the LORD JESUS. And, Reader! allow me to add, that such would be the love of every child of GOD, had

we the same knowledge as *Paul* had. Let you and I, above all things, seek from the LORD a *spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him!* See *Paul's* prayer for the Church, Ephesians 1:15 to the end.

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

(10) Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (11) For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. (12) Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. (13) Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? (14) I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; (15) Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. (16) And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. (17) For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

I would rather seek for grace from GOD the SPIRIT, to improve what the Apostle here observed on the contentions which brake out in the *Corinthian* Church, in relation to the present infirmities of the LORD'S people, than enter into an enquiry of what nature those contentions were. Certain it is, that the purest Churches have their spots, and too often, from the imperfection of all things here below, the LORD'S children fall out by the way. Instead of entering into the discussion, whether those divisions are about infant or adult baptism, kneeling or sitting in services, partiality to ministers, or forms of worship; I would beg the Reader to observe with me, the method *Paul* took to heal those quarrels. *Paul* did I say? not so, it is not *Paul* but GOD the HOLY GHOST who speaks by *Paul*.

His is the office to glorify CHRIST, and here he hath done it most blessedly. All that is done, or can be done to bless the Church, to heal divisions, and to unite the whole body in love, can only be in CHRIST, the glorious Head from whom all grace flows, and in whom all blessings are found. And where faith in CHRIST is in true lively actings upon his Person, blood, and righteousness, there will be found a common principle knitting and uniting the whole body together. It is worthy our closest observation, that in that sweet recommendatory prayer of the LORD JESUS, in which before his death, the LORD committed the whole body the Church into his FATHER'S hands to keep, and from whom JESUS had received it; this formed a most earnest part, and for which the LORD again and again repeated his desire, that his Church might be kept in sweet concord and union. HOLY FATHER, (said JESUS,) *keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are.* And the LORD puts up again the same request three times more in the after part of the same chapter, John 17:11; John 17:21-23. And it is truly blessed to observe, how the Apostles of this divine LORD, followed the same steps in praying for, and earnestly studying to accomplish the unity of the Church. See Romans 15:5-6; Philippians 2:1-2; Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 3:8; 1 John 4:7-12.

1 Corinthians 1:18-29

(18) For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

(19) For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. (20)

Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

(21) For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (22) For the Jews require a sign, and the

Greeks seek after wisdom: (23) But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; (24) But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. (25) Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (26) For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*: (27) But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; (28) And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: (29) That no flesh should glory in his presence.

Never, surely, could the Apostle have chosen a more happy form of words to describe the vast difference between the divine wisdom of the LORD, as manifested in the salvation of the Church in CHRIST, and what is called the wisdom of the world, which uniformly rejects and despiseth it. And we see it every day. If these words of *Paul* had been written but yesterday, they could not more strikingly *set* forth the different characters of the christless, despising salvation by the cross; and the precious souls, who taught of GOD, receive it with open arms, knowing it by heartfelt experience, to be *the power of God, and the wisdom of God, for salvation to every one that believeth*.

Reader! this is one among the many of the believer's evidences to the truth of the Gospel. Fond as some men are, that all the world should be believers; the child of GOD would lose a very striking testimony if it were so. *There must be heresies among you, (said one that could not be mistaken,) that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.* 1 Corinthians 11:19. Never must, never can, the offence

of the cross cease. The children of the bondwoman will always hate the doctrine of the cross. The pride of the human heart, the self-righteousness of corrupt, unhumbled nature, will always revolt at it. And, while the thing itself is the wisdom of GOD, the wonder of angels, and the everlasting joy of the redeemed, both in heaven and earth; to them that perish it appears foolishness, and they perish in their foolishness, And to all such, the word of GOD speaks: *Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish! for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you!* Acts 13:41.

Reader! what a distinguishing mercy it is to be made wise unto salvation, through the faith which is in CHRIST JESUS? And we may see, and indeed we do see every day, under every ordinance where CHRIST is faithfully and fully preached, in the glories of his Person, and the compleatness of his finished salvation, as the whole of JEHOVAH'S purpose of grace, for the recovery of his Church and people, and where those who have been taught to feel and know the plague of their own heart; CHRIST becomes *the all in all*, and their whole souls are melted into holy joy, adoration, love, and praise; we behold no less, the wise in their own eyes, and the prudent in their own conceit, turning with the most bitter looks of hatred against the doctrine of the cross, and rejecting the counsel of GOD against their own souls. CHRIST becomes a stumbling block and a rock of offence, as much now, as to the Jews of old. So the LORD declared by his servants the Prophets it should be; and the LORD be praised, that he hath not left himself without witness: Isaiah 29:14 and Isaiah 33:18. Precious JESUS, I would say, how sweet thy words to my soul,

Blessed is he whomsoever shall not be offended in me!
Matthew 11:6.

By the expressions, the *foolishness* of GOD is wiser than men, and the *weakness* of GOD stronger than men, we are not to understand, as if it implied either foolishness or weakness in GOD. But the sense is, that what the carnal and ungodly in their dim-sighted view consider folly and weakness of CHRIST, and salvation by his cross, is higher in wisdom, and greater in power than all that human knowledge can conceive. So that what men call foolishness, is, in GOD'S esteem, a rich manifestation of his wisdom and power, in conquering sin, death, hell, and the grave, by the very means, which to human wisdom appears the most unlikely and improbable; by CHRIST'S death overcoming death, and by his rising to life again, opening a way to his people to everlasting life. And herein was demonstrated the highest wisdom and power of GOD. Wisdom, in contriving, and power in accomplishing, by such unheard of unthought of ways; the recovery of the Church from the *Adam* fall of nature; punishing sin, and yet pardoning the sinner; taking judgment on the surety, and liberating the principal; bringing praise to GOD from salvation, and overruling sin, which tends to dishonour the LORD; the very means of bringing forth a greater revenue of glory, in, and by, the Person, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and everlasting reign of grace here, and glory hereafter, of GOD'S dear SON. Surely, every heart which knows the blessedness of these precious things, will join the Apostle, and say, however, to them that perish all is foolishness; yet to us which are saved, CHRIST, *the power of GOD, and the wisdom of GOD!*

I must not allow the Reader's attention to pass away from this most interesting view, which GOD, by the HOLY GHOST, hath given of the cross of CHRIST, as the power of GOD, and the wisdom of GOD; before that I have first called upon him to remark with me, what is also said of the LORD'S distinguishing grace in the *holy calling*. Every part of the Bible, indeed, is full to the same, for the whole is of electing love, from beginning to end. But here, the LORD the SPIRIT more especially calls upon the Church to notice it. The brethren, partaker's of the heavenly calling, are directed to behold it. And, while they are commanded to observe, that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; they are no less taught from their own circumstances, to consider, that in their call, it was grace manifested to the foolish, and to the weak, and to the base things of the world. And, Reader! I beseech you to pause, and pass not away for a moment from the consideration of the Church of *Corinth* in those days, in which *Paul* sent this Epistle, and take home the same doctrine now, for it equally holds good in all ages of the Church. We have reason to bless GOD, that while he saith, not *many* are called from among the great, and noble, and wise men of the earth, that the LORD did not, say, not *any*. For, though but few, yet there have been *some*. In the days of CHRIST himself, we find *Joseph*, an honorable counselor, and *Nicodemus* among the rulers of the Jews. But, indeed, for the most part, we find the LORD'S people gathered from among the humbler walks in life, poor in worldly circumstances, as well as *poor in spirit*, made *rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*. But it should be observed also, that the expressions here used by the Apostle, when he saith, that not many wise men, and mighty, and noble, are called, he adds to the term, not many

wise men *after the flesh*; and the same *after the flesh*, is to be subjoined to the mighty and the noble. For their worldly wisdom, and their might, and their nobility, are all earthly. Not that wisdom which maketh wise unto salvation, neither that might which is founded in divine strength, neither that nobleness of soul which distinguisheth the Church of GOD. So, in like manner, the foolish things of the world, and the weak, and the base, which are Chosen, they are in worldly wisdom foolish, and in human policy weak, and in all their own attainments base and despised; but they are in spiritual things, both wise, and strong, and dignified. The HOLY GHOST by *Peter*, calls them, *a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people*. And the LORD JESUS commended *John* to write them to the Churches, as made *kings and priests unto GOD and his FATHER*: 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6. *Reader! may it be your happiness and mine; through grace, to be enabled to enter into the proper apprehension of those words by the Apostle, when he saith, For ye see your calling, brethren!*

1 Corinthians 1:30-31

(30) But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: (31) That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

I beseech the Reader to observe how blessedly CHRIST is here spoken of by the HOLY GHOST, as made all these things to his people, and that by GOD himself. It is not only said, that CHRIST is the wisdom, and the righteousness, and the sanctification, and the redemption of his Church, but that GOD hath made him so. Here, indeed, is the blessedness of the whole. For, when GOD the HOLY GHOST leads a poor sinner to GOD, in the perfections of JESUS; if it be demanded how, or by

what authority, the poor self-condemned creature comes in another's perfections, and not his own? this is the answer: this is faith's warrant, CHRIST is made of GOD unto the soul these things. So that here is the authority in which all the Persons of the GODHEAD join. GOD the HOLY GHOST, who regenerates the sinner, and makes him a new creature in CHRIST JESUS, leads him to the throne, in the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption of CHRIST JESUS; and, taught of GOD the SPIRIT, the regenerated sinner pleads in CHRIST, and by CHRIST, on the footing of CHRIST'S person and work, for acceptance before GOD, and in the covenant word, oath, and promise, of GOD the FATHER! And, how then can any soul fail of justification at the throne, who thus pleads GOD'S grace, and CHRIST'S righteousness, as the sole means of acceptance? Who doth not see all human glory tarnished, and divine grace praised, when as it is written, *he that gloried, thus glorieth the LORD?* Jeremiah 9:23-24.

Reader! pause a moment longer over these precious verses, for they are most precious. You, and I, are both by nature and by practice, so lost and fallen in the Adam-state of sin and corruption, that we are not only miserably blind and ignorant of our state by nature, but so utterly senseless of our ruin, that Until CHRIST, the sun of righteousness, arose on our benighted souls, so far were either of us from seeking redemption, we did not even know that we needed it. How blessed that CHRIST was made of GOD to us *wisdom*, to open to our view a sense of sin, and to make us wise unto salvation? But it would not have been enough to have made us sensible of our misery, and to have instructed us in the way of obtaining salvation by CHRIST out of it, had not the

same LORD which taught us these precious things, taught us also, that He who made CHRIST to us wisdom, made him also our *righteousness*. Oh! the blessedness, when a child taught of GOD, can say, the LORD is my righteousness. But here again, a soul needed somewhat more. The child of GOD, though renewed in soul, is not renewed in body. *The flesh lusteth against the spirit*. I feel, I groan daily under a conscious sense of indwelling, inbred, corruptions. Oh! the grace, the mercy, when my LORD taught Me that CHRIST is made of GOD *sanctification* also, and He who justified me, as freely sanctifieth me. And, finally, to crown all, and to counteract all the exercises, which at any time sin or Satan, the world without, or fears within, might suggest; how blessedly doth this scripture come in to our aid, that CHRIST is not only wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification, but *redemption* GOD'S works, and not man's. GOD'S providing, not our's. And He who gives the covering, puts it on. First gives a gracious acceptation to the persons of his people, in His dear SON; and then blesseth them with all spiritual blessings, in CHRIST; that they may be holy, and blameless before him, in love! *Thanks! thanks be to GOD which always causeth us to triumph in CHRIST!* 2 Corinthians 2:14.

Reflections

READER! let you and I, as we enter upon the perusal of this inspired Book of GOD the HOLY GHOST, first pause, and bless the Almighty Author of it for giving so sweet and precious a portion of his holy word to the Church. Oh! for grace, to be always watching the footsteps of GOD the SPIRIT, who hath

been from the first formation of the Church, to the present hour, watching over it, watering it every moment, and keeping it, night and day. And, oh! for grace, while we bless GOD for giving to his Church some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of CHRIST; to keep always in view, that these are but instruments; it is the LORD himself is the Almighty Minister, presiding over his Church: for *all these worketh that One and the self-same SPIRIT dividing to every man severally as he will!* LORD! from thee, may my soul look for blessing, on thy servant's labors!

And Reader, let us also not lose sight of the LORD'S distinguishing mercy, in this, and all the sacred, and inspired writings, sent to the Church. It is to CHRIST'S Church, they are sent; not to the world. It is to them that are *sanctified*, as the opening of this Chapter shews, not to the unsanctified: to the *called to be saints*, not to them whose names are not written in the book of life. Oh! for grace here also, to watch the LORD'S gracious regard to his Church.

And Reader! let you and I, as we go over the several beautiful, and soul-refreshing portions of this sweet Chapter, remark, the preciousness of JESUS in all, his Person, offices, relations, and characters, to his people; the blessed teachings of GOD the SPIRIT, in glorifying CHRIST JESUS to their view; and the faithfulness of GOD the FATHER, in calling his people to the fellowship of his SON, JESUS CHRIST. And, Oh! for sweet communion, and fellowship, with all the Persons of the GODHEAD, in, and through CHRIST, that amidst all the diversity of forms, and contentions of the several Churches, like

Corinth; our souls may be found resting wholly on CHRIST. And while the fleshly wisdom, and pride of men of the world count CHRIST and his cross foolishness; we may know the LORD JESUS to be to us, the power of GOD, and the wisdom of GOD, for salvation *to every one that believeth*. Thou hast indeed, O LORD, in the instance of all thy redeemed, chosen the weak and the foolish, yea, the base things, to confound the mighty; but the LORD'S strength, is thereby made manifest, in creature weakness And we bless thee, our GOD, that as we have nothing, and are nothing in ourselves, yea, worse than nothing, by reason of ignorance, sin, and unholiness: CHRIST is made of GOD to us, all we need, for grace here, and glory hereafter. CHRIST is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption: and all our glorying is in the LORD!

Chapter 2

Contents

The Apostle enters upon the Relation of his Ministry, which he had exercised among the Corinthians. He reminds them, that he passed by all human Eloquence in his Discourses before them, and had preached only CHRIST. He spews them how GOD the SPIRIT had confirmed his preaching, in their Hearts.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

(1) And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. (2) For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. (3) And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. (4) And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:

(5) That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

If any man might have been supposed qualified to have used the powers of human oratory in preaching; who so proper as *Paul*, who had been brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel*; and who had studied, if we might venture to conclude as much from the elegant speech he made before *Agrippa*, (see Acts 26) the art of rhetoric, which at that time was much in use in the schools? But what a lovely view is here exhibited, of the plan of *Paul's* preaching, in that, he simply preached CHRIST. Reader! how much to be wished were it, that all whom GOD hath called to the ministry, would adopt the Apostle's plan. And indeed, it is matter of astonishment, that men, ravingly called themselves to the knowledge of CHRIST, in their own souls, and spiritually ordained, by the HOLY GHOST, to preach to others; (and of all others it is of little consequence what men uncommissioned preach,) should preach ought beside. When angels came from heaven, at the birth of CHRIST, to announce his arrival, they preached him as a SAVIOR, Luke 2:11. When the SON of GOD came preaching himself, it was the same glad tidings of salvation, Matthew 18:11. And when, after redemption-work was finished, and CHRIST was returned to glory, and the HOLY GHOST came down, the whole burden of the Apostles preaching was to the same amount: GOD (said they) *having raised up his SON JESUS, sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from your iniquities. Hence daily in the temple and in every house, they ceased not to teach, and to preach JESUS CHRIST!* Acts 3:26; Acts 5:42.

There is a peculiar beauty in the Apostle's expression, not only to preach CHRIST, but CHRIST crucified. There were a

thousand excellencies in CHRIST *Paul* had learnt, and on which he had often dwelt, with holy rapture. But the cross included all. There *Paul* fixed his eye, his heart, his whole soul. And, what he felt so truly blessed, to himself, he longed to communicate to all the LORD'S people. CHRIST crucified, was peculiarly suited, to poor sinful men. It was worthy of all acceptation! Reader! how little do those men know of the plague of their own heart, who preach aught beside! Might not a poor sinner say, in every congregation of such men, as *Job* did of, those who read to him their dunghill lectures of patience: *Miserable comforters are ye all: physicians of no value!* Job 16:2; Job 13:4.

What a humbling account the Apostle gives of himself, when standing up to minister among the people! And such must it ever be, among all those who have an awful sense of the solemn charge, in holding forth the word of life among dying sinners. Who shall calculate and note down the tears, and prayers, and anxieties, and tremblings of faithful ministers, who watch for the souls of the people, as they who must give account. Men who rush into the service uncalled, un sent, like the sons of *Eli*, to be put into the priest's office, can have no apprehension what these things mean. I Samuel 2:36. But *Paul's* conscious weakness, and fear, and much trembling, will be easily understood by those awakened minds, who never stand up to minister in the LORD'S name, but with an holy jealousy over their own hearts; and never end their labors, but with a prayer, that their most holy things may be washed from their uncleanness, in CHRIST'S blood! Exodus 28:38

How sweet a testimony was this to the Apostle's mind, of the LORD'S speaking in the word, and by the word, when *Paul* saw

the LORD'S blessing on his labors. The demonstration of the SPIRIT, and of power, in every congregation of the faithful, is indeed the great refreshment, both to minister and people. *Paul* makes this a proof, of the most decisive kind, of the Church being chosen of GOD. See 1 Thessalonians 1:4 to the end. And Reader! it is this, and this alone, which forms the proper foundation, for security in the divine life. What begins in human wisdom and human strength, will end in both; Which is folly and weakness, in the highest attainments. But, what begins in the LORD, will end in the LORD, and be bottomed upon an everlasting security, Isaiah 45:24-25.

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

(6) Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to naught: (7) But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: (8) Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (9) But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (10) But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (11) For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. (12) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. (13) Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the HOLY GHOST teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (14) But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. (15) But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. (16) For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

The Apostle here enters upon the subject of the divine wisdom, in the ordination of the Church, which, while the way-faring man, when taught of the LORD, hath such an apprehension of, as is sufficient to make him wise unto salvation, and that he shall not err therein, becomes a subject of such impenetrable mystery, to the wise and prudent of this world, as they are called, that the highest human intellect, untaught of GOD, can never attain unto it. And this becomes a decided proof of the necessity of divine teaching, and, it was this, which the LORD JESUS thanked the FATHER for, in the days of his flesh, because he had *hid those things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes*, Matthew 11:25-26. See also Isaiah 35:8.

As this wisdom, which *Paul* professed to speak of, was known and understood by those that are perfect, though none of the princes of this world knew it; and yet *Paul* calls it *the wisdom of GOD in a mystery and the hidden wisdom*: it will be highly proper for the Reader to enquire, what apprehension he hath concerning it; that he may, among other marks of examination in relation to himself, try his faith by this standard also, whether it be founded *in the wisdom of men, or in the power of GOD*.

That every thing relating to the Being, and Perfections of GOD, must necessarily be matter of mystery to his creatures; and that no apprehensions whatever can be obtained of Him, but by such revelations as He is mercifully pleased to make of himself; is too obvious to need being insisted upon. But that in those revelations, which, in his infinite condescension, the LORD hath made of Himself, the wisdom of human intellect shall not of itself be able to apprehend, while humbler

capacities, enlightened by the SPIRIT, shall understand; makes the subject, what *Paul* calls *hidden wisdom*, yet more mysterious. The whole, of what relates to the Church, both in the choice of the Church, the being, and blessedness of the Church, chosen in CHRIST before the foundation of the World, and every thing connected with the present time-state of the Church, as well as that glory which is to follow; all forms a subject of mystery. But, when it be considered, that what is apprehended of those sublime things, can, at the best, be only such as our present unripe faculties are capable of receiving; the only astonishment is, that we know so much as we do know, under divine teaching, and not that we know no more. In a world like the present, and in a fallen state, such as man by nature is in; we can know nothing, but what is given us of GOD. The mystery of the divine nature, existing in a threefold character of Persons; is the first, and deepest of all mysteries. And it is no further revealed to us, than as an article of faith. To explain in us, the mode of this existence is not done in all the Holy Scripture. Perhaps it is impossible. Neither is it necessary. It demands our faith on the authority of GOD. It forbids our reasoning upon. Very attempt of this sort is answered in the words of Scripture: *Canst thou by searching find out GOD? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?* Job 11:7. But thus far we learn, that as the word of GOD, reveals GOD, as existing in a threefold character of Persons, and in numberless parts of the sacred word, the actions of each glorious Person are given, and with a plainness and precision which abundantly prove, both their personality, and GODHEAD: the man which doth not acknowledge this fundamental article of all faith, that JEHOVAH exists in a threefold character of Persons, and thereby

different from all his creatures; doth not, in fact, acknowledge the Being of GOD, according to Scripture at all. He virtually denies there is a GOD, when he acknowledgeth not the Scripture revelation of GOD: and whatever wisdom he professeth to have, it corresponds but to that, which *Paul* here speaks of: *the wisdom of this world and of the princes of this world, which come to nought.*

But it is not the mere lip-confession, or tacit acknowledgment of this fundamental truth, which constitutes, what *Paul* calls, *the wisdom among them that are perfect.* A man may be led to agree to a truth, and yet have no life-enjoyment of that truth. But the soul taught of GOD, hath a saving knowledge, and acquaintance with GOD; that is to say, the mind is led to apprehend, that those glorious Persons of the GODHEAD have revealed themselves, and do reveal themselves to the Church, in their several office-characters, and relations, different from what they do unto the World; and the child of GOD is brought into some acquaintance with those blessed manifestations. This is what *Paul* refers to, when he saith, we *speak wisdom among them that are perfect*; that is, among them which are CHRIST'S, and who are made *perfect in CHRIST JESUS*, Colossians 1:28. And wisdom indeed it is, and truly called *the wisdom of GOD in a mystery*; when a child of GOD is savingly made acquainted with it; to discover, the whole Persons of the GODHEAD engaged in it, to make the Church everlastingly blessed, and happy, in CHRIST: that while hidden from the wise, and learned, in worldly wisdom, the humble are taught, that GOD *ordained it before the world, unto our glory!*

Reader! it will be your mercy, and mine, to have a clear apprehension, under divine teaching, of these precious things.

And, since there is such a striking distinction, as the Apostle states there is in this Chapter, between the attainments of nature, and grace; between worldly wisdom, and that which is from above; between the natural man, and the spiritual; it must be of infinite importance, to ascertain the difference, and *to know the things which* (he saith) *are freely given unto us of GOD.*

In prosecuting this enquiry, I need not go over a large field, on a point already known and understood; that by the new birth, or regeneration of the soul, a total change is wrought on the renewed mind. I shall for once, consider this as granted; and that, what the Apostle saith elsewhere, my Reader is already convinced of. *For if any man be in CHRIST, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new,* 2 Corinthians 5:17. But while this great truth is, and must be, most fully allowed, by every regenerated child of GOD, it is not so well understood, as the importance of the subject renders it necessary, that this new creature is wholly in the *spirit*, and not in the *body*. It is our *spiritual part*, which at regeneration is awakened, and brought forth into life, from the death of sin; and not our *bodily part*. The natural man, as *Paul* here calls our bodies, is not renewed, neither made capable of receiving the things of the SPIRIT of GOD, more than before. This is a grand point, to be well and thoroughly understood, by the renewed man, And there is another like it, namely, that while the gracious act, wrought by GOD the HOLY GHOST, in regeneration, is confined wholly to the spiritual part of every child of GOD, and leaves the body, for the present life, in the same state as before, of an unrenewed nature; this one act of GOD the SPIRIT is a

perfect and compleat act, and makes the spirit of the happy receiver of this unspeakable mercy, as holy as it will ever be, in time, or eternity. When this blessed work of regeneration is wrought, it imparts all that is essential to life and holiness, in CHRIST. The act is but once done, and it is compleatly done. There can be no defect in it, *for it is the SPIRIT that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing*. All that are regenerated are alike regenerated: similar to the analogy in nature. Infants, when born in nature, and born perfect in all their parts, are born no more. And the child in grace hath no after addition to its Being. The spiritual life, into which it is brought, can receive no after being, or addition. Growth in grace, there will be, as there is a growth in nature; but the life itself, the spiritual being, and the well-being, deriving, as it doth its whole, from such a source as GOD the HOLY GHOST, is but once done, and done for ever.

Reader! will you allow me to call your attention, somewhat more particularly, to this subject. The very interesting nature of it, will I hope, plead for the indulgence. Perhaps you may not have been accustomed to consider it, in this light. Sure I am, it is truly scriptural. And, if you will grant me the moment's patience, and attention; I shall hope, under the LORD'S teaching, to prove it so. And perhaps you will be the more inclined to grant me this favor, when I add, that I am the more earnest to state it as it appears to me in this scriptural light, because I am inclined to think, that it is to our ignorance in this matter, concerning the work of regeneration, on what part it is wrought, and from whence alone we look for the blessed effects of it, that so many errors abound in the

Church; and of consequence, so many of God's children go in leanness, and mourning of soul, all their days.

Let me begin with first stating, what the Holy Scripture sets forth, of the blessed work of GOD the SON in regeneration. And this I venture to believe, is uniformly said to be wholly wrought upon the spirit. When our LORD described the gracious act of the new birth, in his conversation with *Nicodemus* the Jew, the LORD JESUS clearly defined, that it was wholly spiritual, when he said: *that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit*, John 3:6. And, agreeably to the same distinction of properties, the new birth is said by the HOLY GHOST, to be witnessed to the *spirit*, not to the *body*. *The SPIRIT itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of GOD*. Romans 8:16; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Galatians 4:6. And we are repeatedly told, that the *carnal mind*, and the *natural man*, and *the body flesh*, and the like; *are not subject to the law of GOD; neither indeed can be*. See Romans 8:5 and chapter.

I am well aware, it hath been supposed by some, yea, perhaps by far the greater part of Commentators, that; when the HOLY GHOST, by the Apostle, is thus speaking of the inability of the *natural man to receive the things of GOD*, and that *the carnal mind is enmity against GOD*; the LORD is supposed to allude to his Church and people, during the time of their unregeneracy. But here is the mistake. The natural man, the body of sin and death, is, and must be unavoidably, the same in nature, after a work of grace hath passed upon the soul, as before. It is wholly nature, wholly the same mass, of flesh and blood. If the body was made holy, as the soul is, by regeneration, it would be no longer liable to corruption,

whereas, the hourly tendencies of the body, by reason of sin, is to its original dust. Hence, in distinction to this, when the Apostle *Peter* is relating to the Church, the blessedness of their being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, he adds, *which liveth and abideth for ever*, 2 Peter 1:23. Had the Apostle considered the *body* of believers included in this new birth of the soul; the body, no more than the soul, would any longer be the subject of corruption. And *Paul*, in confirmation of the same, more than *twenty years* after his regeneration, speaking of himself, and his body of sin and death, which he carried about with him, and in which he said dwelt no good thing; declared, that he was *carnal, and sold under sin*, Romans 7:14. I venture to conclude, in what I am sure every child of GOD in their *experience*, as well as *Paul*, cannot but join issue; that in the blessed act of regeneration, it is the *spiritual* part that is renewed, and not the *carnal*. While GOD the HOLY GHOST quickens the *soul*, which was before dead in trespasses and sins; the *body*, still remains, in the unrenewed state of fallen nature. Grace works not upon the old man, while the new man after GOD, is *created in righteousness and true holiness*. Not an atom of the body is sanctified; and not an atom of the soul, left unholy. Blessed be GOD! the hour is hastening, when this mass of sin and corruption; which now interrupts the soul, will interrupt her no more. To the grave it is daily going. And there, (saith the soul in her best hours,) let it go. From thence, it will arise, by the power of the LORD JESUS, to whom, notwithstanding all its unworthiness; it is united:) a *glorified body, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish*, Ephesians 5:27; Philippians 3:21.

But, with respect to the *spiritual* part of a child of GOD, when, by the act of regeneration, GOD the HOLY GHOST quickens it into life; here, the gracious act is perfect, compleat, performed but once, and that once for ever. Very blessedly the HOLY GHOST hath taught the Church, by his servants the Apostles, the foundation on which this doctrine rests; namely, in that, by this quickening of the soul into spiritual life, by his sovereign power, the soul is made a partaker of the divine nature, and can die no more. *And you, (saith Paul,) being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, Colossians 2:13.* Mark the expression: *quickened together with him.* And *Peter* in like terms. *According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life, and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory, and virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption, that is in the world through lust, 2 Peter 1:3-4.* These are most unanswerable, and decided proofs; in point. The soul, by the gracious act of regeneration, is declared to be *quickened together with Him*, namely, CHRIST consequently, hath spiritual life in CHRIST, and can die no more: for JESUS hath said, *because I live, ye shall live also, John 14:19; Colossians 3:3-4.* And this divine power, hath given *all things that pertain to life, and godliness.* Consequently spiritual life, and eternal life, with all their preliminaries; grace here, and glory for ever. And, being made partakers of the divine nature, the soul can be no longer liable to any future death, being by this one act quickened, which before was dead, in trespasses and sins; and the nature which communicates this life, being divine.

Hence, this blessed act of regeneration, brings, with it, eternal life, holiness, and glory. It contains the whole work of GOD the HOLY GHOST, upon the soul. And all, the after acts, in which GOD the SPIRIT draws forth the soul into sweet fellowship, and communion with the FATHER, and with his SON JESUS CHRIST, are but the blessed *effects* of this first *cause*, when bringing the soul, from death, to life; and from the power of sin and Satan, unto the living GOD.

And, Reader! do but add this one thought to the subject, and see, what a beautiful, harmony, and consistency, there is, in this one act of GOD the HOLY GHOST, by regeneration, to the one act, of GOD the FATHER, in election, and the one act, of GOD the SON, in union and redemption. Are we not taught, to look up, with equal reverence, obedience, love, adoration, and praise, to the HOLY THREE IN ONE, which bear record in heaven, as the united source, and joint cause, of all our being, well-being, and blessedness? both not this homage become suitable and proper in us, not only on account of their perfect equality, in all their nature and essence, as JEHOVAH; but also as Manifesting their covenant characters and offices towards us, as the Church in CHRIST? Say then, is it not blessed, yea, very blessed, to contemplate GOD our FATHER, manifesting his love, in electing, choosing, and naming the Church, in every individual instance of the Church; accepting, blessing, and making the whole everlastingly happy, in CHRIST: and this act but once done, for it is eternally done, when done by an unchangeable GOD, and must remain for ever? Ephesians 1:4. And in like manner, is it not equally blessed, yea, very blessed, to contemplate GOD the SON, manifesting his love also, in betrothing his Church to him for

ever; and as this union could be but one act, and when wrought, never to be undone: so in redeeming his Church from the fall, in this time-state of her existence, *by that one offering of himself once offered, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified?* Hosea 2:19-20; Isaiah 54:5. And, if these sovereign acts in GOD the FATHER, and GOD the SON, were but once wrought; wherefore should it be thought less powerful, less important, or less gracious, that GOD the HOLY GHOST, in regeneration, should do the same? Why should he not, by one act, communicate all that pertaineth to life, and godliness, in making as holy, and as everlastingly happy, as can be, in time or in eternity, the spirits of those, whom GOD the FATHER hath once given, and GOD the SON hath once betrothed to himself, and redeemed once for all by his blood?

I have been the more particular in stating, according to my views of the subject, the true Scriptural sense of it, because, for the want of a right apprehension therein, I am persuaded, (as I said before,) many there are, of GOD'S dear children, who go in leanness of soul, and mourning, all their days. And, while they are on the look out, for greater holiness in themselves, it is impossible to be otherwise. They are prompted to this expectation, partly by the remains of unhumbled pride in themselves; and partly from the mistaken views of others, who teach (what they themselves, if they knew better the plague of their own hearts, would confess they never found) a progressive holiness in the divine life. Whereas the great act of faith, and the going forth of the soul, when regenerated by the HOLY GHOST, is upon the Person, and blood, and righteousness of CHRIST. The child of GOD finds his joy in CHRIST, not in himself, or his sweetest

enjoyments. He doth not live upon his attainments, but upon CHRIST'S compleat justifying salvation: not upon what he feels, but upon what CHRIST is: not from a work done *in* him, but upon the work of CHRIST done *for* him. He doth not, like the spider, spin a web out of his own bowels to hang upon; but hangs all the glory upon the LORD JESUS CHRIST. He enters into a full apprehension, of that sweet, and precious Scripture, that CHRIST *is made of GOD unto him, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, that all his glorying may be in the LORD.* It will be a subject of much thanksgiving to the LORD, if these views be sanctified to any of the LORD'S little ones, so as to endear CHRIST, and comfort his people; that all those blessed effects may follow, which the Apostle hath so fully opened in this Chapter, and which arise from divine: teaching, When we can say, as he did: *but we have the mind of CHRIST.*

Reflections

READER! behold the great Apostle in his fervent zeal to the cross of CHRIST! Think, in what view that cross appeared to his mind! He knew it's value. He hath felt, and experienced, the blessedness of it, to his own soul; and as such, he could not remain silent, in holding it forth to others. And his own weakness, and feebleness, in preaching CHRIST, and him crucified, he considered as nothing, while he kept in remembrance that divine strength was rendered the more conspicuous in human nothingness. Nay, the Apostle rejoiced in the consciousness, that the more feeble his ministry was in itself, the more evident would appear CHRIST'S glory: and their

faith be found, not to stand *in the wisdom of man, but in the power of GOD.*

Blessed be GOD the HOLY GHOST, for the sweet instruction communicated to the Church, in this precious Chapter. Yes! thou Almighty Teacher! we do find cause to bless thee, for the very clear, and decisive line thou hast drawn, between natural knowledge and divine; between the wisdom which is from beneath, and that which is from above. None, indeed, of the princes of this world, knew the LORD of glory: neither will they ever, by mere human intellect, discover the hidden wisdom of GOD. But, while these things are hidden from the wise and prudent; oh! the graciousness of our GOD, to reveal them to babes! LORD! may thy people know their sonship, and adoption- character, by thy divine instruction; and may we have all grace, while thou art condescending to be our Teacher, *to know the things which are freely given to us of GOD, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

Chapter 3

Contents

The Apostle is prosecuting the Subject of his Ministry in this Chapter. Under several sweet Similitude's, he describes the Manner he had used among them, for Instruction.

1 Corinthians 3:1-2

(1) And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, *even* as unto babes in Christ. (2) I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able *to bear* it, neither yet now are ye able.

I beg the Reader, at his entrance on this Chapter to observe, the faithfulness of *Paul*, as a minister of CHRIST. He had marked out in the preceding Chapter, the character of such as were taught of the SPIRIT: and had drawn the line of distinction, between the natural man, which receiveth not the things of GOD, and the spiritually taught believer. Here, therefore, he makes application, of what he had said on that subject, with an eye to them. Though they were regenerated, or he could not have considered them as brought into Church communion; yet they were but so weak in understanding, that he could not call them any thing more than mere babes in CHRIST. And babes in CHRIST can only receive the first things of nutriment, and such as tender capacities find easy of digestion; as babes in nature, can relish scarce any thing more than to be fed at the breast. Reader! do not overlook the very sweet instruction, which is given here, both to ministers and people. A minister, like *Paul*, taught of GOD the HOLY GHOST, and sent forth by GOD the HOLY GHOST, may here learn, how necessary a part in the exercise of the holy function it must be, to study the state, and circumstances, of the LORD'S household. The different ages, and conditions, and characters of the LORD'S people, are carefully to be considered. *Paul*, describing to *Timothy*, the outlines of a faithful servant of JESUS CHRIST, saith; that he should *study to shew himself approved unto GOD, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*, 2 Timothy 2:15. And such a workman must learn from his Master, how to turn his hand to every branch of his employment, in that part of it more especially which concerns feeding and instructing the LORD'S people. The babes in CHRIST must have the sincere milk of the Word, that they may

grow thereby. The more advanced in grace, and knowledge, may be brought acquainted, as their spiritual capacities are enlarged, in the stronger food of the soul. All are to have suited portions; and none of them to be overlooked, or forgotten. Hence the LORD JESUS himself describes the faithful servant, in his household, who thus administers in his name, to his family, and calls him blessed, whom his LORD when he cometh shall find so doing, Luke 12:42-43. And the people, under such a charge, may learn, from what is here said, how necessary it is for them to receive the ministry of the LORD'S servants, with the utmost affection and good will. Babes in CHRIST, and young men, and FATHERS, as John calls them, all come in for their separate, and distinct portions. And well are faithful ministers entitled to the love of their people, while they need their prayers, that in so arduous a work, one might be neglected; but, both minister and people together, be blessed of the LORD. It were well if the *former* had everlastingly in view the model of CHRIST'S first sermon in the synagogue. when JESUS opened his commission in that place, and declared the prophecy *Isaiah*, to be that very day in his divine Person fulfilled; he immediately added, that his office was, to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that were bruised, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, Luke 4:18-19 with *Isaiah* 61:1-2. And it were well if the *latter*, I mean the people ministered unto, were to remember this feature in the character of JESUS, and to form their judgment of the servants, who stand up to minister in the LORD'S name, by this plan of their Master. If a minister in following the steps of CHRIST in preaching, hath the Gospel to preach to the poor,

and the blind, and the broken-hearted, the captive soul and the bruised, to speak to in the same sermon; various means must he adopt, so as to suit the various wants if such diversified characters. And how can a minister labor faithfully, amidst so many claims; or a people have their full and distinct portions, except the LORD directs both? The consciousness of this made *Paul* often cry out to the Church; *Brethren, pray for us*, 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Hebrews 13:18.

1 Corinthians 3:3-15

(3) For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? (4) For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I *am* of Apollos; are ye not carnal? (5) Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? (6) I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. (7) So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. (8) Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. (9) For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, *ye are* God's building. (10) According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. (11) For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (12) Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; (13) Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. (14) If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. (15) If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

I would refer the Reader, for the proper apprehension of the distinct meaning, between a state of nature, and that of grace, absolutely considered; to the observations which were offered in the preceding Chapter. And, in addition to what is there said, I would here remark, that the *carnal state* the Apostle alludes to in those verses, means, that the *Corinthians*, instead of having a single eye to the LORD'S glory, in the ministry of his word, suffered themselves, from the remains of indwelling corruption in their natural feelings, to form parties, in their choice of ministers, and to class themselves into separate congregations, in preferring one servant of the LORD before another. That this is the charge *Paul* brings against them is evident, from what he saith. Some were for *Paul*, and some for *Cephas* or *Peter*, and some for *Apollos*. While we cannot but lament, that from the infirmity of our poor fallen nature, such evils should arise; it will be highly proper, the Reader should carefully observe, that the Apostle, in calling them carnal, doth not say that they were not regenerated, or that they had fallen from grace. Had the persons, to whom the Apostle sent this Epistle, not been regenerated, they could not have been called the Church; for the Church of GOD cannot be said to be formed, but of *the called in CHRIST JESUS*, Jude 1. And indeed, as *Paul*, though reproving them for their contentions, calls them *babes in CHRIST*; nothing can be plainer, than that they were truly regenerated believers. But, Reader! we need not go back as far as to the days of the Church of *Corinth*, to learn the melancholy consequences which arise in Churches, from ill-judged, and too often misplaced partiality, respecting ministers, If both the servants of the LORD, and the congregation of the faithful, were always guided with a single

eye to the glory of CHRIST; partiality to particular ministers would lose its influence. It may serve, however, to teach us, what poor creatures we are, when we overlook the Master, to have our minds fixed upon the servant. It may serve also to shew us, how much corruption still remains in our sinful bodies. And it may act, under the LORD'S grace, to beget an holy jealousy, over our hearts, when we see how easily, even in the best things, sins of infirmity steal upon our affections.

I cannot but admire the very happy method, which the Apostle adopts to cure those errors, in calling off the attention of the Church from all the different servants they had been classing themselves under, and directing their minds solely to the LORD. *Who then (saith he) is Paul, and who Apollos?* Well might he, ask the question. Who were they, or who is any man, but receiving, all from the LORD. *All the good that is done upon earth, the LORD doeth it himself.* It would tend to damp all human pride, if this thought was kept alive by grace, and always uppermost in the heart. For indeed, strictly and properly speaking, it is impossible to add to the LORD'S glory, by all the services of his creatures. And this one thought, duly weighed in the heart, would at once throw to the ground, all the supposed services of men, or angels: namely, that JEHOVAH'S glory is *in* himself, and *from* himself, and *to* himself. If no world, or creature, had ever been, GOD in his threefold character of Person, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, are all glory to each other. How strikingly *Elihu reasons* on this point, taught by the HOLY GHOST. *If thou be righteous, what givest thou hire? or, what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man, as thou art: and thy righteousness may profit the son of man!* Job 35:7-8. How

unanswerably conclusive this is? And how ought the consideration of it, to humble to the dust, every idea of the services of creatures. It is the grossest mistake upon earth to suppose, that the praises of GOD, or the services of man, are enjoined for adding to GOD'S glory. Even among men, the wise and noble part of our fellow creatures pass by, and dislike any praise or approbation which is offered them. And how condescending must it be in the LORD, to receive the services of his creatures? Indeed, so far ought the consciousness of being employed by the LORD, as instruments in his Almighty hand, to any service, excite pride, that it tends, under grace, to beget the greatest humility.

I have said thus much on those passages of the Apostle, by way of introducing another observation. When the Apostle saith, that *we are laborers together with GOD*; he, could not possibly mean, that GOD and his creatures are co-operating in such a way, or manner, as though the LORD'S cause could not go on, and be accomplished, without the labors of his servants. Every principle of reason, as well as revelation, is full to reprobate the daring thought. Indeed the beautiful similitudes, which *Paul* hath made use of, to explain himself on the subject, fully sets at naught the idea. The Church of GOD is his husbandry, his tillage, his building. And of both husbandry, and building, he is the LORD, Proprietor of all; of consequence, every particle of the earth, and every stone in the house his Church are *by* creation, redemption; grace; and glory. *He who hath built all things is GOD*. The different departments in this house, and all the servants of it; are his. The field of his husbandry, the seed, the manure, the ground, into which the seed is cast; the sun's

warmth; the clouds' fatness, the dew, the rain, the product; in short, the whole are solely his. *The earth is the LORD'S and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein.* For *he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.* And what a beautiful conclusion the sacred Writer makes from this delightful statement, when he followeth it up with this question: *Who shalt stand in the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?* Not *Paul, not Apollos;* not *Cephas,* in army services of theirs, or any work of their hands. But *He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, who hath not lifted his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.* And who can this be, but the LORD JESUS CHRIST? This is GOD'S righteous servant, whom JEHOVAH hath chosen, and in whom his soul delighteth. This is He who both labored in GOD'S husbandry, and in GOD'S building; as *a SON over his own house, whose house are we,* See Psalm 24 throughout; Isaiah 42:1 with Matthew 12:18. But of all other laborers, as the LORD JESUS told his disciples, it may he said, *when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say; we are unprofitable servants, we have one that which was our duty to do,* Luke, 17:10.

It would be well if such humbling views were in the contemplation of every one that ministers in holy things: The Apostle gives the most satisfying and unanswerable reasons for it; in all that is said in this Chapter. For though; with an eye to the Apostolic office; he considers himself *as a wise master builder:* not that he saith he is one; but *as One,* and which he expressly ascribes to *the grace of GOD which was given unto him;* yet he as expressly declares; that CHRIST is the only foundation. And this JEHOVAH, not *Paul,* laid in Zion,

Isaiah 28:16. And where CHRIST is laid, all the pure truths of the Gospel, which are laid upon this foundation, and which the Apostle compares to *gold, silver, precious stones*, these are not man's building; but the LORD'S. As the Prophet expresseth it: *The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, his hands shall also finish it*, Zechariah 4:9. It is to be feared, that the mis-perversion of the Apostle's Meaning, in supposing that the *gold; and silver, and precious stones* he spake of, referred to man's improvement, instead of GOD'S grace, hath been productive of much spiritual pride: Every thing that is precious, can only be the LORD'S. And the smallest attention, when the LORD the SPIRIT is the Teacher; would be sufficient to discover the fallacy of such thoughts as makes man his own builder; even when CHRIST is seen; and acknowledged as the only foundation. The HOLY GHOST by *Paul*, refers the whole building into his own sovereign power. The Church is said to be *built* (not builders) *upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets*; that is, the same foundation as they are built upon, which is CHRIST, Ephesians 2:20 to the end. And the same Almighty SPIRIT by *Peter* that the Church, as lively stones, are *built up*; (not build), *a spiritual house*, 1 Peter 2:4-5.

And, in further proof of this important doctrine; it is observable, that when the Apostle adds, Now if any man build upon this foundation, *wood, hay, stubble*; he doth not mean, yea, he cannot be supposed to mean errors, either in life or doctrine, for CHRIST is still said to be the foundation, where this wood, and hay, and stubble are added. But the wood, and hay, and stubble, mean whatever is a man's own. And a vast deal of this rubbish is found, even in pure Churches,

where CHRIST is made the only foundation. For if ministers, or people, for a moment look off CHRIST, as the whole of salvation, and at any time take comfort, and part confidence, in what they feel, or what they do; if, instead of deriving an unceasing firmness from what CHRIST is to his Church, and the Church is to CHRIST, either of them date their safety and happiness in a work supposed to be wrought in them, and the experience supposed to be found by them, seeking strength from a supposed grace in the soul, instead of sure grace in CHRIST for the soul; all these comforts are the wood, and hay, and stubble, and which, in the day when every man's works shall be made manifest, shall be burnt up. Reader! it is a blessed thing, rightly to estimate the LORD JESUS CHRIST. And, while making Him what GOD hath made him, the ALPHA and the OMEGA, the FIRST and the LAST, for salvation to every one that believeth: let Him that hath laid the foundation, carry on the whole superstructure, in the regenerated soul. And then, what GOD by the Prophet hath said, will be the sure consequence. *He shall bring forth the head stone thereof with shoutings, crying, grace, grace unto it, Zechariah 4:7.* But, it is dangerous thing to the soul's comfort, to rest in any thing but JESUS; for very sure it is, that all the child of GOD hath, whether grace, or strength, or comfort, from the SPIRIT'S work in the heart, he hath all from CHRIST. And when the fiery trial comes, to try a man's work, though as the Apostle saith, because his foundation is an CHRIST, he himself shall be saved; yet, to have all his own things which gave him comfort, in the wood, and hay, and stubble of his supposed improvements burnt up, though he himself escapeth, yet so as by fire; will be a mortifying thing the pride of the heart. Oh! it is blessed to live wholly *upon* CHRIST; to come daily,

hourly, to CHRIST, and to be sensible of our momentary need of CHRIST, as when the Day-spring from on high first visited the soul. One of old found this in his own experience, and hath left it upon everlasting record, for all that come after to make CHRIST, as he did, the whole sum and substance of his happiness and joy; and not taking the least confidence in the best, and highest feelings of his own heart: *I will go* (said he) *in the strength of the LORD GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only*, Psalm 71:16.

1 Corinthians 3:16-23

(16) Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (17) If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are. (18) Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. (19) For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. (20) And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. (21) Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; (22) Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; (23) And ye are Christ's; and Christ *is* God's.

The Apostle is carrying on the same similitude of a building, in allusion to the Church of CHRIST, when he demands of the *Corinthians*, whether they knew not, that as a Church, founded in CHRIST, and united to CHRIST, they were the temple of GOD. And it must be confessed, that it is a beautiful similitude. For, as the human nature of CHRIST became the temple for his GODHEAD, and in whom dwelt all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily; so the divine nature may be said to have made the bodies of his people his temple, for his in-dwelling habitation, when by the gracious work of regenerating,

illuminating, converting, comforting, sanctifying, and in short, all the operations of the HOLY GHOST, the LORD dwells in them, and walks in them; manifests himself to be their GOD, and they his People. See Leviticus 26:11-12; Ezekiel 37:26-27; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:20 to the end; 1 Peter 2:4-5.

I do not think it necessary to offer any comment upon what the Apostle hath observed, on the sure destruction of the unregenerate, which defile the LORD'S temple, with their false doctrines, and will-worship. But I would beg the Reader to remark with me, how blessedly in the close of this Chapter, the HOLY GHOST, by the Apostle, calls off the Church from every thing, whether ministers or people, men or things, to fix the soul wholly on CHRIST. *All are yours* he saith, things present, or to come; *all are yours*, because *ye* are CHRIST'S, *and* CHRIST is GOD'S. Reader! behold the security, the everlasting security of the faithful! As CHRIST is the sent, the sealed, the anointed of JEHOVAH, GOD'S CHRIST, GOD'S chosen, GOD'S salvation to the ends of the earth: so CHRIST and his Church being one, in the divine mind, will, and pleasure; all are the Church's in CHRIST, being one with CHRIST, and deriving all from CHRIST. So that if CHRIST be mine, all is mine. His blood to cleanse, his righteousness to justify, his holiness to sanctify. CHRIST and his fulness, CHRIST and his all-sufficiency, lies at the bottom of all mercies. And, when it be considered, the greatness of his Person, and the glories of his salvation, the infinite nature of his blood-shedding and perfection, and the infinite merit of his work and righteousness; here is enough for a child of GOD to live upon, in time, and to all eternity. JESUS gives a fulness of blessedness, and a fulness of duration, to all that He is in

himself, and to his Church and people for ever. His presence sweetens all, sanctifies all, gives a blessedness to all; and makes all completely blessed. *All are your's, and ye are CHRIST'S, and CHRIST is GOD'S.*

Reflections

DEAREST LORD JESUS! while I hear thy servant, as in this Chapter, reprovng the Church, for their weakness in faith, and their little disposition to any thing more than as babes in CHRIST; how can I overlook my LORD'S tenderness to his flock, who hath fed them in all ages, and is feeding them now, as a Shepherd! Dearest JESUS! thou knoweth how to bear with the weaknesses and infirmities of thy people! Thou carriest the lambs in thy bosom, and gently leadeth those that are with young.

Do thou, gracious LORD, watch over the husbandry of thy Church! Do thou order all the apartments of the spiritual building. LORD! grant, that I may never bring the wood, and hay, and stubble of any thing of my own, to lay upon the foundation JESUS CHRIST; And let the gold, and the silver, and the precious stones, laid upon, CHRIST, be the doctrines of CHRIST, that in the hour of trial, they may never be burnt up, but be found to be CHRIST'S, which, will stand every trial.

And blessed LORD the SPIRIT! suffer me never to lose sight of that soul-reviving truth, that the bodies of CHRIST'S members are his Temple. LORD, take up thine abode in my poor nature, and reign in me, and rule in me, as the Almighty LORD of every affection. And let that vast inheritance, to which, by my new birth, I am begotten; be my everlasting consolation,

against every exercise, and sorrow of life. While I can say with the Church, *I am my beloved's, and his desire is towards me*; sure I am, that both in life and death, things present and things to come, every matter and every event, must minister to the LORD'S glory and my salvation. If CHRIST be mine, all is mine. And blessed shall I be in my basket and in my store, in my lying down and in my rising up, in life, in death, in time, and, to all eternity. Precious thought! *Allure ours, for we are CHRIST'S, and CHRIST'S is GOD'S*. Amen.

Chapter 4

Contents

A further Account respecting Ministers. The humbling View Paul gives of himself, and his few faithful companions.

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

(1) Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. (2) Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. (3) But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. (4) For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. (5) Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

The Apostle opens this Chapter, with a very modest account of himself, and his fellow laborers in the ministry, desiring the Church to consider them in their proper character, as literally no more than ministers of CHRIST, and stewards of the mysteries of GOD; though *Paul* himself was an Apostle, and

eminently called to be an Apostle, and might have just taken to himself the honor of that exalted station. But he declined the whole. He rather kept in view the awful responsibility of the trust, than prided himself upon the dignity of the office. And he desired, that every one would consider him, and his companions in the ministry, with whom he put himself upon a level, in no higher light. How exceedingly to be wished were it, that in every succeeding age of the Church, men who profess the ministry, had taken the Apostle for an example. For what is a minister but a servant? according to our LORD's own statement of the character, Matthew 20:26-27. And what is a steward, but one whose chief office it is, to make provision for the food of the family, and to give the household their portion in due season, Luke 12:42-43. And the importance of considering things in this light, is very evident, when it be recollected, that the LORD of the household, when he finally comes to reckon, will take account of his servants, not for the dignity of their office, but for their usefulness in his employment; not for rank, but labor, not according to their station among men, but for their labors in the house of GOD. And, what a tremendous account will those have to give, who have thrust themselves into his service, uncalled, unauthorized, by Him; and when there, have neglected his service, and lorded it over GOD's heritage, and taken the oversight for filthy lucre? The LORD JESUS hath already read the sentence of all such, in that solemn Scripture. *The LORD of that servant will come in the day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint his portion with the unbelievers,* Luke 12:46.

1 Corinthians 4:6-13

(6) And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and *to* Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think *of men* above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. (7) For who maketh thee to differ *from another?* and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it?* (8) Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you. (9) For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. (10) We *are* fools for Christ's sake, but ye *are* wise in Christ; we *are* weak, but ye *are* strong; ye *are* honorable, but we *are* despised. (11) Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; (12) And labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: (13) Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, *and are* the offscouring of all things unto this day.

The Apostle is here speaking by a figure of speech, in allusion to what he had said of the similitude the Gospel Ministry bears to planting, or watering, in the preceding Chapter, And the Apostle follows up, the same doctrine, in those verses, in referring all gifts, whether spiritual, or temporal, to the LORD. And as *Paul's* design in this representation was to heal the divisions made in the Church by the people classing themselves under different ministers; never could he have taken a more effectual method, than the one he hath here adopted; in bringing all upon a level, to shew, that every thing a man hath, either in gifts, or graces, is of the LORD.

I beg the Reader to pause over the humble, but faithful portrait *Paul* hath drawn of himself and his companions in the ministry. As the LORD and Master himself was, so were his

servants: What! A gazing stock, and reproach to the world's wonder? As it was prophesied of CHRIST and his people, so eminantly with reference to his ministering servants was it said: *Behold, I and the Children whom the LORD hath given me, are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts which dwelleth in Zion*, Isaiah 8:18. Perhaps there is not a more striking testimony to the truth as it is in JESUS, than this verdict the world gives to CHRIST and his followers. It is not indeed as much considered as it merits, by the faithful; but evidently from this striking prophecy, and the accomplishment of it, in all ages, down to the present hour, the HOLY GHOST hath given it for a blessed token, to his faithful people; and it is their privilege to regard it accordingly. In the present day, which is a day of a CHRIST-despising generation, it comes home with peculiar blessedness to the few of the LORD'S little flock, whom the LORD commands to fear not, for it is the FATHER'S good pleasure to give them the kingdom, Luke 12:32. I will beg the indulgence of the Reader to dwell a little upon it. *Paul* here speaks of himself, and his companions in the ministry, as set forth last of all, a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. Perhaps the theatre, on which *Paul* considered himself and them exposed, alluded to the singularity of their ministry, which, to the world, was sure to subject them to insult, and derision, and cruelty. And the angels he had in view, might either mean, ministering angels of good, whom the LORD commissioned to their protection, and who looked on, and observed their faithfulness, with pleasing testimony: Hebrews 1:14. Or, more probably, evil angels, and the apostate spirits of darkness, whose malice, thwarted them in all their labors. But whosoever they were which looked on, he

and his followers became the subjects of a gazing stock, and derision.

Reader! pause over the review, and behold the conformity in this instance, as in many others, in the LORD'S honored ones, being predestinated to his image, Romans 8:29-30. Though CHRIST was declared by a voice from heaven, and in the hearing of the people, to be the beloved SON of his FATHER; yet was he despised and rejected of men, and accounted for a blasphemer, and as one that had a devil. And as they called the Master of the house *Beelzebub*, so they counted them of his household. The Old Testament Saints, as Well as the New Testament Believers, were all branded, in their day, and generation; with obloquy and reproach. *David*, under the oppression, cried out: *I am as a wonder unto many; but thou, O LORD, art my, strong refuge*, Psalm 71:7. And the Church at large felt the same, and said: *Have mercy upon us, O LORD; have mercy upon us, for we are exceedingly filled with contempt*, Psalm 123:3-4. And the Prophet speaking to *Joshua*, and the Church, who as High Priest was a type of CHRIST, and his people, thus expressed himself: *Hear now, O Joshua the High Priest, thou, and thy fellows which sit before thee; for they are men wondered at*, Zechariah 3:8. And, if they were simply wondered at for their singularity of character, in preferring the reproach of CHRIST, to all the treasures of the world, as *Moses* did: Hebrews 11:26, it would be of little consequence. But, being hooted at, is the smallest evil, sustained for an attachment to the LORD JESUS CHRIST: cruelty to their persons were added to contempt.

And what rendered the matter the most distressing was, that this treatment, came not so much from the heathen world,

from whence it might have been expected, as from those who acknowledged the LORD. The professor, more than the profane, opposed, the LORD's people. Hence, by the Prophet, the LORD comforted his chosen ones; under the assaults and scoffs of their opposers. *Fear the word of the LORD* (said GOD,) *ye that tremble at his word. Your brethren that hate you, that cast you out for my name's sake said: let the LORD be glorified. But he shall appear to your joy: and they shall be ashamed,* Isaiah 66:5. And in the after ages of the Church, the LORD JESUS pointed out this persecution, as particularly arising from *brethren, and kins-folks, for his name's sake.* Yea, saith CHRIST, *they shall put you out of the Synagogues: and the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth GOD service,* Luke 21:16-17; John 16:2.

Pause, Reader! and when you have taken a leisurely review of the subject, in marking the treatment shown to the Old Testament saints, and New Testament believers, for their singularity of sentiment, in holding the blessed and special truths of godliness in their purity, from the more ordinary and general profession of them: I would beg you to look at the subject, as it relates to the present hour. Whoever looks deeply, and beyond the mere surface of things, cannot but observe that a full, free, and finished Gospel, is as much despised now, by mere nominal professors, as it ever was, in the days of the Apostle *Paul*. The preaching which holds forth CHRIST, as all, and in all, is a sect as much now as ever every where spoken against. He that would escape the censure of licentiousness, it is not enough, that he manifests the purity of his principles by an holiness of life, and conversation; but he must compliment human nature, at the expense of divine

truth. The great, and leading doctrines of our holy faith, must be kept in the back ground of preaching; and a man must insist more upon the moral law, as a rule of life, than the grace of GOD, which bringeth salvation: more upon a supposed work wrought *within us*, than the work of CHRIST wrought *for us*. *Paul* could not thus preach, and therefore he fell under condemnation. His whole doctrine led to the contemplation, and the enjoyment of the electing love of GOD the FATHER; the grace of union with CHRIST, and interest in all that belonged to CHRIST, as the free, unmerited gift of GOD by CHRIST: and the absolute necessity of being regenerated from the death of sin, in the Adam-nature in which the whole Church of GOD is born, by the work of GOD the SPIRIT. These were the sole topics of *Paul's* preaching. And the one sole object of his desire was, that he might win CHRIST, *and be found in Him*. Reader! see to it, as it respects yourself, that *Paul's* desire is yours; for depend upon it, that where the truth, as it is in JESUS, is preached, it will be found, that *the offence of the cross is not ceased*. An accommodating spirit to the times, in preaching any thing, and every thing, but CHRIST, is among the awful and portentous signs of the present day. A Church chosen of GOD, redeemed and justified wholly by sovereign grace, sanctified in CHRIST and regenerated by the SPIRIT; these are the source and fountain of all spiritual life. But when men make these but as procuring causes, and blend with CHRIST and his finished and all-perfect work, the creature's faith, and repentance, and obedience, as the means of favor; the spring of all spiritual life is gone: and to all such preachers it might be said, as by them of old, when wild gourds were mingled with their food: *O thou man of GOD, there is death in the pot!* 2 Kings 4:40.

1 Corinthians 4:14-21

(14) I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn *you*. (15) For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *have ye* not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. (16) Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. (17) For this cause have I sent unto you Timothy, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church. (18) Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you. (19) But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power. (20) For the kingdom of God *is* not in word, but in power. (21) What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and *in* the spirit of meekness?

So much hath been said from those words of the Apostle, concern spiritual FATHERS, and of the begetting souls to CHRIST by conversion, that I cannot wholly pass over the subject. I have indeed elsewhere, in my *Poor Man's Concordance*, given my humble opinion, that the term is improper; and that I conceive the Apostle himself had no such meaning as is generally supposed, in calling himself the spiritual FATHER of those *Corinthians*. And certainly it savors much of vanity, hath a great tendency to nourish spiritual pride, and is altogether foreign to *Paul's* account of himself to *Timothy*, as the chief of sinners, 1 Timothy 1:15. But, in addition to the observations I there offered, I would beg to say, that as regeneration is the sole work of GOD the HOLY GHOST, it is not possible to reconcile it with common sense, how any act of a minister, can be considered as a co-worker, or a subordinate worker, in such an act, as re-creation. It is true, indeed, that *faith is said to come by hearing; and hearing by the word of GOD*: Romans 10:17. But hearing, implies life to hear, and when a soul, which was, before regeneration, dead in

trespasses and sins, is brought into life; faith cometh by hearing, as a means of grace. But there is a mighty difference between *hearing*, and *creating*. And, as man hath no hand in the old creation; so neither in the new. The work itself is solely the LORD'S. It is the peculiar and special office of GOD the HOLY GHOST. And is rife of Heaven's wonders. And surely, none less than He, which brought again from the dead our LORD JESUS CHRIST, can be competent to bring from death, those who by nature, are *dead in trespasses and sins*, Ephesians 2:1.

I shall leave the consideration of the subject to the Reader's own judgment, under the LORD. But I confess I cannot but conclude, that it must be highly unsuitable, irreverent, and blamable, to assume the name of spiritual FATHER, from any supposed services, in the ministry of CHRIST. It is the special office of GOD the SPIRIT to beget souls from the death of sin. It is his work: and it is his sole glory. And when we hear the LORD speak of his jealousy, *as* we do in many parts of Scripture, it ought to be well considered, how the LORD expresseth himself: *I am the LORD, that is my Name: and my glory will I not give to another: neither my praise to graven images*, Isaiah 42:8.

Reflections

Reader! do observe with what lowliness of heart, *Paul* desired the Church to regard him, and his companions in the ministry: mere servants and stewards, not as lords over GOD'S heritage. *Paul's* great object was, to be found faithful. He considered, that all he was, and all he had, his gifts, graces, knowledge, time, talents, were wholly for the benefit of

CHRIST'S Church. And, as he told the LORD'S followers upon another occasion, when writing to them, so in all the departments of his ministry, he felt a willingness to have imparted unto them, not the Gospel of GOD only, but also his very soul, because they were dear to him. Oh! the blessedness of sect a frame of mind, when found among the servants of the LORD'S sanctuary.

But, Reader! do not overlook the sure consequence of faithfulness in the ministry. *Paul* experienced it then: and the same, more or *less*, is the same now. Simply to preach CHRIST, in all his glory, fulness, and all-sufficiency, never did, nor ever will fail, to call forth the anger of all self-righteous Pharisees, and excite the indignation of the mere nominal professor, even more than the profane. It was so in the days of the Apostle, it is so now, and will continue through the whole time-state of the Church. But, oh! how sweet to eye CHRIST amidst all exercises, and to refer all events into his sovereign hand, as *Paul* did; *he that judgeth me, (said he,) is the LORD!*

Almighty Master! give to all thy faithful servants grace, that when reviled, they may bless; when persecuted, may suffer it; when defamed, they may entreat. May they be content to suffer shame, so JESUS be but honored; and delight to go forth unto their LORD, *without the camp, bearing his reproach!*

Chapter 5

Contents

The Apostle here enters upon the Subject of Reproof. He very sweetly introduceth the Example of CHRIST, and speaks of Him as the Passover. The Chapter concludes with Exhortations.

1 Corinthians 5:1-5

(1) It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. (2) And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. (3) For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed. (4) In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, (5) To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

It is well worthy the Reader's observation, as he enters upon the perusal of this chapter, how much disposed the corrupt part of our fallen nature is, to oppose and interrupt the renewed part, in all her progress in grace. Satan is well aware, that he hath no opportunity so effectual, to harass and distress the soul of a child of GOD, but by his enticements of the body. He, therefore, allures the flesh with its corruptions and lusts, to bring on a coldness in spiritual exercises. And, if he can but accomplish his devilish purpose, by interrupting the soul's access to the throne, his object is soon effected, in drawing off the mind that fleshly pursuits may be the more easily followed. Oh! what a deadness have some precious souls at times found on this account?

It should seem, from what is here said, that some one of no small rank in the Church, on account of gifts and abilities, had fallen into a foul offence of an unnatural and forbidden

connection, even to the marrying his FATHER'S wife. And the Church was so elated with the services of this man that they absolutely overlooked in the preacher, the shameful conduct of his life.

The Apostle was now at *Philippi*, from whence, as we learn at the conclusion of this Epistle, he wrote it to the Church at *Corinth*. His absence, however, did not lessen his Apostolic authority, nor, his zeal for the LORD'S service. And *he*, therefore, in a sharp and decided manner, passeth judgment upon the person so offending. The sentence is remarkable, and deserves our attention. The offender was to be delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the LORD JESUS. Various have been the opinion of different Commentators on this remarkable sentence. But I confess, that to my view, it appears to mean nothing more, than that this incestuous person should be for a time deprived the privilege of Church communion. And this, indeed, properly speaking, was a delivery to Satan, and to a child of GOD most painfully afflicting. And I am the more inclined to this opinion, because it was the act of the Church. *Paul* passed the sentence, by directing, in the name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, what should be done; but the Church, when gathered together, was to perform it. And, as the object intended from it was, that while the flesh was mortified, (which, to a man of great abilities, must have been humbling indeed,) the spirit might be saved in the day of the LORD JESUS; this plainly proved, that though this man had fallen into this foul offence, yet was he still considered by the Apostle as a child of GOD.

As the subject is truly interesting, I would take occasion therefrom, to offer an observation or two upon it, which, if the LORD be pleased to bless, may be rendered profitable.

It is very evident, from the Apostle's statement of this man's case, that he considered the spirit and the flesh in this instance, as in the Apostle's general method of explaining this subject, as in opposition to one another. And this I beg may be noticed as an additional proof, that when a child of GOD is renewed by regeneration, it is the spirit only which is quickened, the body remains the same. The old man, as it is called, the body of sin is wholly unrenewed. Grace makes no alteration here. No part of it is sanctified. So that, while at the new birth or regeneration, the spirit is quickened and made a partaker of the divine nature, and can die no more; and being united to CHRIST, and part of CHRIST, and interested in all that belongs to CHRIST, is as holy in CHRIST'S holiness, as it ever will be to all eternity; the body is the same mass of corruption as it derived from *Adam* in the fall; the sin generated in the Adam-nature, hath its subsistence in the flesh, and will remain until corruption puts on incorruption, and mortal puts on immortality.

Now it is the blessed state of a renewed soul, to be brought into such a sweet communion and fellowship with the FATHER, and with his SON JESUS CHRIST, by the gracious influences of the HOLY GHOST; that when the LORD the SPIRIT hath quickened, and made a child of GOD a new creature in CHRIST JESUS, his spiritual part is daily, hourly, aiming through grace, *to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts*. Hence, the everlasting warfare in every renewed mind between the flesh and the spirit, between corruption and grace. And it would be

well, if every child of GOD, when brought out of a state of nature, was made sensible of this. He is renewed but in part. He still carries about with him a body of sin and death, which interrupts but too often, his soul's desires and pursuits. And, although, through the divine strength imparted to him, he is enabled, and not unfrequently, to keep down, and restrain, and mortify the old man; yet, daily he knows and feels to his sorrow, that sin and sinful corruptions still retain their dwelling place in the flesh, and which compel him to confess with *Paul*, that *when he would do good, evil is present with him*. And, although, *he delights in the law of GOD after the inward man; yet he sees another law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members*, Romans 7:21 to the end.

Such being evidently the case, and which induceth continual soul exercises, and deep groans, at times, in the hearts of the LORD'S people: it hath been questioned, and in great humbleness of enquiry; wherefore is it, that since sin is so offensive to the LORD, and so loathsome to every renewed child of GOD, that the LORD should permit such remains of indwelling corruption to continue? Might not the LORD, when renewing the spirit, have made holy the flesh also? Are not our bodies the LORD'S, as well as our souls? Hath not JESUS married both? And will not my body, (saith the child of GOD,) as well as my soul, be CHRIST'S for ever in the upper world, and in glory with Him for ever? How then is it, that I groan daily, being burdened with sinful flesh, when my LORD knoweth how much I long for deliverance, and how easily my

LORD, with a word speaking, could make my body as holy as my soul?

These, and the like questions, have arisen in the minds of GOD's people, when regeneration-work hath taken place in their souls from the earliest days of the Church, and been brought forward in every generation from age to age. But, after all that hath been said, and after all the earnest cries of the soul, GOD's dear children feel the same, and groan at times as deep as ever. Reader! pause over the subject. Depend upon it, the LORD hath a gracious design in all his dispensations, and doth, and will, overrule every event of the present time-state of his Church to his own glory, and his people's welfare. The HOLY GHOST hath said, by his servant the Apostle, that *all things work together for good to them that love GOD, to them who are the called according to his purpose*, Romans 8:28. And well we know, that sorrows and afflictions, trials and temptations, wants and weaknesses, in his Almighty hand, minister to this end. And even sin itself, the evil of all evils, though in its very nature and tendency hath everlasting ruin in its deadly fruit; yet like medicine extracted from poison, becomes subservient to the divine glory, when the LORD converts evil into good. Thus the malice of hell, in the ruin of Adam, laid a foundation for the sweetest of all mercies in CHRIST. Thus the cross of JESUS, when sin brought on his death, became the everlasting salvation and life of his people. And thus all things work together for good to them that love GOD, and are the called of GOD. Mark the expression. To them that *love* GOD; not that love *sin*, but *hate* sin. To them that hate their own bodies, on account of sin, and loath themselves in their own sight. Oh! how a child of

GOD, when fully made acquainted with the plague of his own heart, will hate sin, and hate self, and fly to CHRIST to seek deliverance from it. Reader! these thorns in the flesh keep souls humble. The consciousness what a mass of evil mingles up with all we say, and all we do, destroys all dependence upon both. And far better is it to be thus humbled in self, that CHRIST may be all in all, than even if our hearts were more pure, if so be, that this supposed purity made us proud. And how do we sometimes long to be dissolved, and to be with CHRIST, when any renewed instance of human infirmity makes a child of GOD go heavily, and in sharp soul distress?

1 Corinthians 5:6-8

(6) Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? (7) Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: (8) Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.

I am the more inclined to think, that the delivering of the person, before spoken of by the Apostle, to Satan, referred to the separating him from Church communion and ordinances, by what is here said of keeping the feast on the Passover, inasmuch as the Apostle bids them, at the same time he calls them to observe the feast, to purge out the old leaven. But whether so or not, it is very blessed, the authority which GOD the HOLY GHOST hath here given to call CHRIST our Passover, because it clearly and decidedly proves, that that sacred service in the Jewish Church, was wholly typical of CHRIST. And again in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the blessed SPIRIT confirms the same, when telling the Church, that *Moses* kept

it by faith. What faith? Surely an eye to CHRIST. See Exodus 12:42; Hebrews 11:28. Now the Christian feast is a feast upon CHRIST'S sacrifice. That sacrifice, as CHRIST our Passover, was once offered, Hebrews 10:10; Hebrews 10:14. But the feast is to be kept continually, *For as often as we eat of this bread, and drink of this cup, we do shew forth the LORD'S death till he come*, 1 Corinthians 11:26. And it is a beautiful direction the Apostle gives of keeping this feast, that there is to be no leaven with it. For, as the Jews of old, before the celebration of the feast of the Passover, searched by the light of a lamp every secret corner and part of their houses, to see if there was any leaven hid away, and which if they found, they at once removed; so the true believer in CHRIST, is to have no leaven to mingle with CHRIST. His heart, he prays the light of GOD'S SPIRIT to search, and take away every thing of his that might be mingled with CHRIST and his righteousness, that he may receive a whole CHRIST into a broken heart. CHRIST, and CHRIST alone, is the LORD'S Passover; and CHRIST, and CHRIST alone, is his also. Reader! it is very blessed when a child of GOD views CHRIST as GOD the FATHER views him, and makes him as JEHOVAH makes him, the ALPHA and OMEGA, the beginning and end of salvation.

1 Corinthians 5:9-13

(9) I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: (10) Yet not altogether the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. (11) But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat. (12) For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? (13) But them that are without God

judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

I do not think it necessary to detain the Reader with any particular observation on what is here said in those verses. He very plainly teacheth us, that what he wrote was to the Church, not to the ungodly world. He saith that he hath nothing to do in judging them that are without. These he leaves to the LORD. But his affectionate advice was to the Church. And to the Church he again recommends their putting away from among them that wicked person. And if, as I am inclined to think, that this putting away, was for a season from ordinances, for the humbling the soul, and admonishing the Church, it serves to shew, how watchful the Apostle was over Ordinances and Church government, and becomes a suitable pattern for the Church or God, in all ages, to adopt upon all like occasions of sin in the members

Reflections

SEE, my soul! what corruptions the human heart is exposed to, and how the peace and prosperity of Church-communion, is liable to be interrupted by the improper indulgence of fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. Oh! for grace to keep the heart with all diligence! LORD, do thou keep thy Church, thy people, with thy watchful care, for without thee we are nothing!

Blessed be GOD the HOLY GHOST for this short but sweet portion in this Chapter, which calls upon us to behold CHRIST, *our Passover, sacrificed for us*; and to know our LORD in this most precious, and blessed office-character. Yes! thou dearest

JESUS! methinks I would eye thee with unceasing delight, as *the LAMB of GOD slain from the foundation of the world*. Thou wert, indeed, and art still, and ever will be, a *lamb of the first year without blemish, and without spot*. Thou wert taken out, as the Jewish lamb was; from among the flock, the One, the holy individual One chosen by GOD from among the people; *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens*. LORD! give me grace to keep the feast on this, thy one, thine all-sufficient sacrifice, to thy praise and my unceasing comfort, during the whole of my time-state here below, until thou shalt bring me home to the marriage supper of the LAMB in heaven. Let there be no leaven found in my heart or house. Oh! for the LORD so to prepare me for this and every other holy ordinance, that I may make CHRIST my whole and sole Passover. Let me so paschatize and keep the feast upon my LORD'S sacrifice, that both in doctrine, and in life, and conversation, CHRIST may be all, and in all. JESUS will preside at his own table, who both makes the feast, and is the feast, my New Testament altar, sacrifice, and sacrificer. And I shall sit down at his table with great delight here below; and ere long, at his table above, with *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, the heirs with the whole Church of the same promise!

Chapter 6

Contents

The Apostle opens this Chapter, with giving Directions to the Church, how to manage their Disputes without the Law. He closeth the Chapter with a short, but very blessed Account,

that the Bodies of CHRIST'S People are Members of CHRIST'S Body.

1 Corinthians 6:1-8

(1) Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? (2) Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? (3) Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? (4) If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. (5) I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? (6) But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. (7) Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather *suffer yourselves* to be defrauded? (8) Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that *your* brethren.

If what the Apostle hath said in these verses, was duly considered, and more especially, the authority by which the Apostle delivered it, was taken into the account, it would put an end to a thousand vexatious contests in life. There is some little difficulty to apprehend what *Paul* meant by the saints judging the world, and judging angels. And, yet, from the manner of speaking, which the Apostle useth, in saying, *know we not*, it should seem to be a thing so perfectly well understood, as admitted no question or necessity of enquiry. Certain it is, that the LORD JESUS spake of this judgment, when telling his disciples, that *they which had continued with him in his temptations, he had appointed to a kingdom; and that they should eat and drink at his table in his kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel*, Luke 22:28-30. See also Revelation 2:26-27; Revelation 3:21. And, as the

saints of GOD have passed from death to life at regeneration, and being, justified freely in CHRIST, there is now no condemnation to them, the judgment which is to take place on the ungodly, they will behold on the great day, Romans 8:1. But how far those scriptures are intended to imply, that CHRIST'S members are to be assessors with him, I leave with the Reader to consider.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

(9) Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, (10) Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

What a striking passage is here? I pray the Reader to be very attentive to it. The *Corinthians* as a city and people were full of uncleanness, even to a proverb; so much so, that to say, a *Corinthian* woman; was a similar term to a woman of the town. Hence, as the *Corinthians* abounded in every species of luxury and uncleanness; and the LORD in his providence and grace, gathered a Church from among them; the Apostle reminds them of what they once were, that he might the more strikingly make them sensible of what they now are. *Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the LORD JESUS, and by the SPIRIT of our GOD.*

I hope the Reader will allow me to enlarge a little somewhat more particularly, on this most precious portion of the word of GOD. For, if I do not greatly err, here is enumerated the

several office-acts of all the Persons of the GODHEAD, and which comes in most blessedly in this place, when stating the mighty change wrought upon the hearts of the LORD'S people, in proof that every poor sinner, when saved and called with an holy calling, is indebted for this unspeakable mercy, to the united love and grace of FATHER, SON, and Holy GHOST. And this is, indeed, one of the fundamental articles of our most holy faith, 1 John 5:7; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Matthew 28:19. It is true, that the mercies here enumerated, are not placed according to the usual order of GOD the FATHER'S choosing, GOD the SON'S redeeming, and GOD the Holy GHOST regenerating. But no objection can arise from thence. For sometimes one is spoken of first, and sometimes another. See 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 2:18; Colossians 2:2; 1 Peter 1:2. But each glorious Person of the GODHEAD, in their office character relation to the Church, is certainly referred to in this verse; and this is abundantly satisfying in proof of their grace, and love, and favor.

The Apostle begins with the work of GOD the SPIRIT. *But ye are washed.* And what a sweet confirmation is this of the great work of regeneration?, The same great Apostle, in his epistle to *Titus*, hath introduced the subject much in the same manner as in this epistle to the *Corinthians*; only when writing to *Titus*, he included himself, as being by nature in the same original uncleanness with all. *For we ourselves also* (said he) *were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divine lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of GOD our SAVIOR toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his*

mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the HOLY GHOST, which he shed on us abundantly, through JESUS CHRIST Our SAVIOR, Titus 3:3-6. Now, though this office-work of GOD the HOLY GHOST is the *last* spoken of, according to order in the antient settlements of eternity, when that Covenant which is ordered in all things; and sure, is originally mentioned, (Psalm 89:3.) yet is it the *first* which gives a discovery to the precious child of GOD of the covenant of grace. For until we are *washed* by the washing of regeneration, the kindness and love of GOD toward man, hath never appeared to that individual soul, who then, for the first time, finds himself *called with an holy calling, and is made willing in the day of GOD's power.* 2 Timothy 1:9; Psalm 110:3. Hence, therefore, though the electing love of GOD the FATHER chose that precious child of GOD before all worlds, (Ephesians 1:4) and marked his name in the book of life, (Revelation 21:27; Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3) yet until GOD the HOLY GHOST put his Almighty hand to the work, and *quicken*ed the souls, *dead by nature*, in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1), the soul was unconscious of his high birth right, and knew nothing of the FATHER'S love in *choosing*, or the SON'S love in *redeeming*, to all the purposes of race and mercy. Neither is there a single blessing that we can lay claim to, or indeed have we the smallest conception of, until this sovereign act of grace hath passed upon the soul. Reader! pause, and ask your own heart, whether those blessed words of Paul to the *Corinthians* can be applied to you? *But ye are washed!*

The Apostle next saith, *But ye are sanctified.* Jude addresseth the Church in like manner, when he saith, *To them that are*

sanctified by GOD the FATHER, preserved in JESUS CHRIST, and called, Jude 1. I do not presume to say, that *Paul* had the same views concerning the being sanctified, when he told the Corinthians, *ye are sanctified.* Some have thought that he alluded to the sanctification of the spirit of this people. And it is possible it may be so. But I am free to think otherwise. The sanctification or setting apart in GOD the FATHER'S choice of the Church from everlasting, I humbly conceive to be here meant, agreeably to the analogy of scripture. And in this sense, it comes in very sweet, after the Apostle had told them of their being washed by regeneration. For, hereby, they were now enabled to trace their mercies to their source, in beholding themselves sanctified, or set apart by the FATHER, being regenerated and brought forth into spiritual life by the HOLY GHOST.

The Apostle proceeds in his account, and saith: *but ye are justified in the name of the LORD JESUS, and by the SPIRIT of our GOD.* And here, if I err not, is intended to set forth the justification of the Church by CHRIST; of whom it is expressly said, that *he was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification,* Romans 4:25. And thus, on the presumption that I am correct, we have in this beautiful verse, an account of the several office-characters of the whole Persons of the GODHEAD: in GOD the SPIRIT'S gracious act of washing by regeneration, of GOD the FATHER'S love in sanctifying or setting apart by election; and of GOD the SON'S justifying his redeemed, by his blood and righteousness. It may be said indeed, and it ought to be said, as a most blessed and soul-refreshing truth, that these several acts here spoken of are in different parts of Scripture ascribed to each

glorious Person indifferently. But this is but a further confirmation of the whole; and an additional testimony to the divine unity, John 5:17-18. And very blessed it is, to trace the acts of each glorious Person and the united acts of all. Reader! may it be your happiness and mine, if it be the LORD'S will, to have the same sweet assurance given us, as *Paul* here gave to the *Corinthian* Church; that we are washed, and sanctified, and justified, *in the name of the LORD JESUS, and by the SPIRIT of our GOD!*

1 Corinthians 6:12-14

(12) All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. (13) Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body *is* not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. (14) And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.

There is some difficulty in apprehending the Apostle's immediate design in the former part of these verses. Probably it might refer to somewhat personal, respecting the *Corinthians*. But there is no difficulty to understand the Apostle's beautiful allusion to CHRIST, and his mystical body, when he saith, *the body of a believer is for the LORD, and the LORD for the body*. CHRIST'S mystical body, which is the whole body of the Church, was given him by the FATHER before all worlds. JESUS delights to speak of this body upon every occasion; highly prizing it on his FATHER'S account, as well as his own, and to whom he promised the HOLY GHOST, John 17:6-10; Psalm 21:2; Song of Solomon 7:10; John 14:17-18. And it is by virtue of this union, and oneness, between CHRIST and his people, that the bodies of the redeemed will be raised

up at the last day. They will not arise as the unredeemed will, brought forth by the naked power of GOD, but from an union with CHRIST. So *Paul* speaks. *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 dwelleth in you,* Romans 8:11. Even in the grave, and dust of death, there is an union of the bodies of CHRIST'S redeemed, to the LORD their Head, by virtue of which, at the great day they will arise; and as the LORD JESUS said *because I live, ye shall live also,* John 14:19.

1 Corinthians 6:15-20

(15) Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make *them* the members of a harlot? God forbid. (16) What? know ye not that he which is joined to a harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. (17) But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. (18) Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. (19) What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the HOLY GHOST *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? (20) For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Numberless very blessed things, are contained within the compass of these verses. I beg the Reader's attention to them in order. *First.* The Apostle reminds the Church of a precious truth; which is so plainly taught in the Gospel, and supposed to be so perfectly known and understood by every regenerated child of GOD, that he takes it for granted, they all knew it, and were daily living in the enjoyment of it; namely, their union, and oneness, with CHRIST. *Know ye not that your bodies are members of CHRIST.* The sacred holy body of CHRIST which the SON of GOD took into union with him is

Personal. But CHRIST'S mystical body is the whole Church. Now, it is highly important, that this should be thoroughly understood, and, apprehended, by every member of CHRIST'S mystical body. The whole person of a child of GOD, he whom the FATHER hath given to his dear SON, and whom GOD the SON hath betrothed to himself, and redeemed by his blood and righteousness from this time-state of sin and corruption; is truly, and virtually united to CHRIST, in body, soul, and spirit. For though the body is not renewed at regeneration, and it is the spirit only that is quickened, which before this gracious act of GOD the SPIRIT was dead, by reason of the Adam-fall, in trespasses and sins; yet the whole man is united to CHRIST, and as a member of CHRIST'S body of his flesh, and of his bones, is part of CHRIST. And in proof of it, whenever a child of GOD'S, his spirit joins the society of the spirits of just men made perfect; and though the body returns to the dust, yet, in consequence of an union with CHRIST, as his glorious Head; he will arise from the dust of the earth at the last day. This proves that the whole person of a child of GOD is united to the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Secondly. The Apostle takes it equally granted, the Church knew, that, by virtue of this union with CHRIST, one and the same SPIRIT lived, and acted, in both. *He that is joined unto the LORD is One SPIRIT.* This glorious and momentous truth became too important, in *Paul's* view, to be lost sight of by the Church. For what could be equally interesting? The same Almighty GOD the SPIRIT which anointed, filled, and made blessed the human nature of CHRIST; anointed, filled, and made blessed all his members. In CHRIST indeed, as in a fountain. In them as in a vessel. But still One, and the same.

The LORD *giveth not the SPIRIT by measure unto CHRIST. In him dwelleth all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily*, John 3:34; Colossians 2:9. But *unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of CHRIST*, Ephesians 4:7.

Thirdly. When GOD the HOLY GHOST quickens the soul of a child of GOD by regeneration, he becomes a life-giving, soul-renewing source, in the spiritual part of the person; and makes the body his temple, according to his original and eternal promise, Ezekiel 36:25-28; Leviticus 26:11-12. So that, by virtue of this, the HOLY GHOST becomes a quickening SPIRIT, to give a vital union between CHRIST and his members, and to keep alive the principles of grace he hath planted, and maintain that life in the soul, as a branch in the vine. And, while influencing the spirit of the believer, in opening Continual communications from CHRIST, as the Head to his members; the redeemed are enabled to mortify the deeds of the body, by His indwelling presence, Romans 8:13.

And, *lastly*, to mention no more: what endears the whole to every child of GOD is, that this personal union, by which the believer is united to CHRIST, as GOD-Man, in body, soul, and spirit; is an everlasting, indissoluble union, which nothing can separate or destroy. *Because I live*, saith JESUS, *ye shall live also*, John 14::19. Hence, the Apostle was taught by the HOLY GHOST to comfort the Church, both with the secrecy, and the safety, of all the people of GOD. *Your life*, said he, *is hid with CHRIST in GOD. When CHRIST who is our life, shall appear, then ye shall also appear with him in glory*, Colossians 3:3-4.

From all these considerations, and more than these, which are included in the Apostle's observations; he argues, both the

shame, and sin, of joining, the members of CHRIST'S body, with the members of an harlot. And he shews, as plain as words can make it, that as the whole Church, and every individual of the Church, is chosen by GOD, bought with the price of CHRIST'S blood, and renewed by the HOLY GHOST; they are no longer their own property, but CHRIST'S, by every tie which can make them so, both by creation, and redemption; and therefore are called upon, to glorify Him, whose right they are, in body, and in spirit, which are GOD'S. I beg the Redder to observe, that it is CHRIST, who is here spoken of as GOD, whose right the Church is, by having bought it with a price. And this by the way becomes a very plain, full, and decisive testimony to the GODHEAD of CHRIST. And very blessed it is, when a child of GOD, gives the glory to CHRIST as such, both in body, and in spirit, which are his.

Reflections

READER! let you and I learn, from this interesting Chapter, how utterly unsuitable, and unbecoming it is, in a child of GOD, called out of the Adam-fall of nature, and redeemed from the law of works, to be entangled in courts of earthly judicature, when we are professedly looking for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is GOD. Oh! what a reproach it is, as the Apostle saith, to see brother going to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers!

Let us pause again, and again, over that precious Scripture, of sinners washed, sanctified, and justified, when brought out of nature's darkness, and the shadow of death. And, oh! what delightful view are we called to contemplate, in being told, and with such an assurance of undoubted testimony, that our

bodies are the temples of the HOLY GHOST. *Solomon* was struck with astonishment, in contemplating the infinite condescension of JEHOVAH to regard the house; which he had made. *Behold, (said he,) the heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee!* But here we are called upon to behold GOD, the HOLY GHOST making the bodies of his people his temple. LORD! give me grace to honor those members of CHRIST'S mystical body, which are made the indwelling residence of the HOLY GHOST; and never by any act of sin and infirmity; desecrate what the LORD calls his temple. Precious LORD JESUS! let me never lose sight of this blessed truth: that I am thine, and bought with a price. Oh! that every thought, and word, and action, could give glory to thy Holy Name!

Chapter 7

Contents

The Apostle is chiefly treating in this Chapter, on the Subject of Marriage. He dwells largely on the several Circumstances connected with it, and makes very many blessed Observations, by way of Improve. went.

1 Corinthians 7:1-3

(1) Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: *It is good for a man not to touch a woman.* (2) Nevertheless, *to avoid* fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. (3) Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

I have often considered a great part of this Chapter as having a spiritual illustration. And sure I am, if we were to read it in

many parts of it with an eye to CHRIST and his Church, as the Apostle beautifully spiritualized the same subject elsewhere, (see Ephesians 5:32) to this amount; we should find numberless passages in it, sweetly explained in this way. As for example: In the opening of it, while *Paul* speaks of the advantage a man would have in a single state; may we not say, what pains, and agonies of soul, the SON of GOD would have saved himself, had he never touched our nature, neither regarded our lost and ruined state? Precious JESUS! What unspeakable mercies doth thy Church, thy Spouse, derive from her union with thee? But who shall calculate, yea; what heart shall conceive the sorrows which arose out of thy Surety-ship, when redeeming our ruined nature, from the guilt and consequences of the fall?

I am not to be told, that the Apostle, in the greater part of this Chapter, is answering certain questions the *Corinthians* proposed to him on the subject of marriage. This is evident from the first verse, in which he takes notice of the Church having written to him upon this occasion. Nevertheless, as their questions had respect to the times in which they lived, and the particular customs to which they were subject, and are altogether in many cases mentioned in this Chapter, foreign to the manners of the present day; I venture to believe, that both the Writer and Reader of this *Poor Man's Commentary*, will find it more profitable, to have our minds exercised unto godliness, under the HOLY GHOST teaching, while perusing this Chapter, if we consider the Church's union with CHRIST; and see whether some very sweet and precious instructions, concerning that union, may not be gathered from what is here said.

Hence, when I read, that *to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and every woman her own husband*; I not only see the LORD'S solemn ordination, and appointment, from the very first dawn of revelation, when at the creation of our first parents, *Adam* and *Eve*, the precept went forth, that *a man should leave his father and his mother, and cleave unto his wife, and they should be, one flesh*; (Genesis 2:24) but I see the blessedness of union between CHRIST and his Church, which that marriage of *Adam* and *Eve* was designed to represent. It was CHRIST, concerning whom the LORD GOD said, *it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him*, Genesis 2:18. And it was the Church, which the LORD GOD did form, to be an help meet for him, and an help mate to him, which as his spouse, his bride, might be a partaker with him, and from him, of all that is communicable of grace here, and glory to all eternity to JEHOVAH'S praise, and the Church's happiness. And therefore, with an eye to this, how blessedly we read, what GOD the HOLY GHOST by the Apostle here saith, in the opening of this Chapter: *let every man have his own wife, and every woman have her own husband*, CHRIST hath but one wife, his Church; and his Church hath but one husband, the LORD JESUS. *My dove, my undefiled*, (saith the Bridegroom in the Canticles), *is but one, she is the only one of her mother; she is the choice one of her that bare her*, Song of Solomon 6:9. And elsewhere the LORD blessedly saith: *Thou shalt abide for me many days: thou shalt not play the harlot: and thou shalt not be for another man: so Will I also be for thee*, Hosea 3:3. Reader! do not overlook the love of JESUS, in those sweet scriptures; that amidst all our spiritual fornications, and departures from the LORD, JESUS never departs from us. *The*

LORD GOD *of Israel saith, that he hateth putting away.* See a beautiful scripture to this effect, Malachi 2:14, to the end. See also Hosea 2 throughout.

And sure I am, that no child of GOD, who is truly and savingly regenerated, can read in this Chapter what is said of *the husband rendering unto the wife due benevolence*, but must be led (if so be the HOLY GHOST opens to his view the thought,) to contemplate, the unceasing grace, and mercy, and loving kindness of the LORD JESUS. With what earnestness of affection doth JESUS woo every individual of the persons the FATHER hath given him to himself? How many, and how unceasing are his love calls, to allure us to his arms? Though in our fallen state, we *have made a covenant with death, and with hell we are at agreement;* yet when JESUS comes to demand his own, he saith: *your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand,* Isaiah 28:15; Isaiah 28:18. By the sweet and gracious influences of the HOLY GHOST at regeneration, all the holds of Satan are broken down, and the world and sin lose their charms; and notwithstanding all our loathsomeness and unworthiness as we are in ourselves, our poverty, weakness, ignorance, and the innumerable provocations wherewith we have provoked him to anger, JESUS unites us to himself, makes us his spouse, cleanseth us in his blood, cloatheth us in his robe of righteousness, makes us comely from the comeliness which he putteth upon us, brings us to his ordinances here, and will bring us home to his marriage supper in heaven, when all the purposes of his holy will are fulfilled; and grace is consummated in endless glory. Reader! Is this the due benevolence JESUS renders to his wife the

Church? Oh! that you and I could bear as cheerful a testimony concerning ourselves, when it is said, in the latter part of the verse: *and likewise also the wife render due benevolence unto the husband*. But oh! thou dear LORD! how often, as a treacherous wife departeth from her husband, hath my poor heart been wandering from thee? LORD! let me hear thy *sweet* voice by the Prophet: *Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding*. May the LORD enable me to answer: *Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the LORD our GOD*, Jeremiah 3:14; Jeremiah 3:22.

1 Corinthians 7:4-17

(4) The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. (5) Defraud ye not one the other, except *it be* with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. (6) But I speak this by permission, *and* not of commandment. (7) For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. (8) I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. (9) But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn. (10) And unto the married I command, *yet* not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from *her* husband: (11) But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to *her* husband: and let not the husband put away *his* wife. (12) But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. (13) And the woman which hath a husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. (14) For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. (15) But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such *cases*: but God hath called us to peace. (16) For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save *thy* husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether

thou shalt save *thy* wife? (17) But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.

Having by the foregoing observations, aimed to shew, how capable this and similar chapters and portions in GOD'S word are, of being spiritualized; I would now also endeavor to consider, some of the several expressions which the Apostle hath made use of in this Chapter, which at first view are not so plain to be understood.

The general phrases, of wives having no power over their own bodies, and husbands in like manner over themselves, and the charge of not defrauding one another, but with consent for the duties of religion: these are expressions as delicately framed, as the nature of the subject would admit; and they intimate the mutual obligation, that each party is to attend to one another, in all the departments in which the married state can be supposed to be circumstanced: that none of the enemies of our salvation, neither Satan, nor the world, nor the lusts of our own, corrupt and fallen nature, may at any time tempt to evil. And I take occasion, from what the Apostle hath here said, to observe, that very sure I am, even among the LORD'S people too little attention in the minuter circumstances of life, in temper, disposition, the want of accommodation, and what *Paul* elsewhere calls *bearing one another's burdens, and so to fulfill the law of CHRIST*; hath been, and frequently is productive of many sad consequences, in social, and religious life, Galatians 6:2. It would be well, if all professing godliness, were attentive to those things, that no occasion might be given to the adversary to blaspheme. To behold such as profess to know

the LORD, and to have passed from death to life, *followers of GOD in CHRIST, as dear children*; and by that profession, to be *supposed as walking in love, as CHRIST also hath loved us*; and to become *examples of believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*, and yet of temper's so unkind, that except when actually engaged in seasons of worship, those with whom they dwell find continual occasion to complain there is somewhat highly unsuitable, and unbecoming in all this where is the Spirit of CHRIST, and the meekness of JESUS, it may be said? And I have heard it more than once said by some, and have found cause to blush when hearing it, as unable to answer the charge: "*if there were no, other life than the present, I would rather spend my social hours with some amiable tempers, who make no profession of grace, than dwell with many that do.*" Solomon long since observed, *that it is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman*, Proverbs 21:19. And whether man or woman, if professing godliness, and yet indulging a fretful, irritable temper, it brings great reproach upon the blessed Gospel of CHRIST, and is productive of much discomfort to his people.

When the Apostle in this Chapter draws a line of distinction between what he speaks by commandment, and what from himself, we are not to suppose that he means his authority was not the same. The commandment, to which he refers, is the precepts, which are found in the Word of GOD on the subject, Genesis 2:24; Exodus 21:19. So again, when he saith, *that he would all men were even as himself*: He doth not mean in relation to the married, or the unmarried state. For it is not known whether *Paul* had, or had not a wife. And

if unmarried, he could not be supposed to wish that there were no marriages. But *Paul* modestly wished, that all men were blessed with grace, to the state in which they were, as himself.

So once more, when *Paul* saith, that *the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband*, we are not to suppose the Apostle meant, that the *one*, which is a partaker of grace, sanctifies, or makes holy the *other*, which is not a partaker of grace. None but GOD the HOLY GHOST can regenerate, and make holy; and therefore this is impossible. But the sense is, that by virtue of one of the parties in marriage being in a state of regeneration; it renders the state of matrimony, which is between those two persons, a sanctified, or holy state, notwithstanding the unsanctified unholy state of the other party. And hence the children, which otherwise would be unclean, springing from both parents, if both had been unregenerate, are now by virtue of one of them, holy; that is, are born in holy wedlock. And, it should be considered moreover; that in this Chapter, where those terms are made use of, the Apostle is writing to a Church gathered from heathenism and idolatry. Therefore, if one of the parties in wedlock be still in heathenism, this doth not make the children heathens, because the other is a believer. Hence the children are sanctified, that is, are born in holy wedlock. And this is all that is, or can be meant by it, as relating to the circumstances of human life. A husband's regeneration cannot produce the regeneration of the wife, neither the wife's the husband. Neither are children, by any birth of nature, even if both parents are regenerate, made thereby children of grace.

But, all that is here said, relates to the state of holy wedlock, as concerning transactions in social life; and a sweet scripture it is, to comfort the people of GOD, when, in either case, man in grace happens to be united to a woman not in grace: and so on the other hand, a gracious woman to an ungracious man. But while *this* Scripture affords consolation under such circumstances, it is truly blessed, when both parties are true yoke-fellows, have first given themselves to the LORD, and then to each other; and are one in CHRIST, 2 Corinthians 6:14. But, while so much may be said, and indeed ought to be said from this scripture, in reference to the marriage state in human life, I beg the Reader not to overlook, the very sweet and precious instruction arising from this subject, in a spiritual sense, as it relates to the Church's marriage with CHRIST. Here, indeed, and in truth, our glorious, holy Husband, sanctifies his whole body the Church; for by *the one offering of himself once offered he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*, Hebrews 10:14. And by his uniting his Church to himself, she is made holy in his holiness: *The root being holy, so are the branches, Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one*. Oh! precious Sanctifier of thy people! Yes! thou holy LORD, we hear thee say *For their sakes I sanctify myself*, Hosea 2:18-19; Jeremiah 23:6 and Jeremiah 33:16; Isaiah 54:5; Hebrews 2:11; John 17:19.

What the Apostle hath added in the question put both to the wife, and husband, about saving each other, hardly needs an observation. By saving, simply means no more than the being instrumental in bringing unbelievers under the means of grace. *No man can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to GOD a ransom for him. For the redemption of the soul*

is precious. And this is solely the office of CHRIST. The LORD hath done it, and being once done *it ceaseth for ever*, Psalm 49:7-8; Hebrews 10:14. And when souls are brought under the word, and that word is prayed over; this is the utmost that can be done. And very hopeful it is when GOD's children are enabled so to do; and find their minds led out in the service, by GOD the HOLY GHOST. The LORD that quickened one poor sinner can quicken another. And he that mercifully called me, (a child of GOD may say,) can, if he so please call you. But here the matter must rest. *What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thine husband? And how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?*

1 Corinthians 7:18-40

(18) Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. (19) Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. (20) Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. (21) Art thou called *being* a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use *it* rather. (22) For he that is called in the Lord, *being* a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, *being* free, is Christ's servant. (23) Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men. (24) Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God. (25) Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. (26) I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, *I say*, that *it is* good for a man so to be. (27) Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. (28) But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you. (29) But this I say, brethren, the time *is* short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; (30) And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed

not; (31) And they that use this world, as not abusing *it*: for the fashion of this world passeth away. (32) But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: (33) But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please *his* wife. (34) There is difference *also* between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please *her* husband. (35) And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction. (36) But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of *her* age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry. (37) Nevertheless he that standeth steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will keep his virgin, doeth well. (38) So then he that giveth *her* in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth *her* not in marriage doeth better. (39) The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. (40) But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God.

As the Apostle on this subject of circumcision, as well as all the other points on ordinances, wrote under the immediate inspiration of the HOLY GHOST; it is to the peace and happiness of the Church, to have a clear instruction concerning those things. And what is here said, is highly satisfactory, being stated by the LORD himself in his government of his Church and people. Here we are expressly taught that if a Jew be called by the SPIRIT, his former circumcision hath nothing of objection in it. He is not to conceal, or even wish to conceal, his having been circumcised. *Let him not become uncircumcised.* He cannot indeed be so. The thing itself in fact is impossible. But the Apostle probably alludes to the case of

some, who in times of trouble, when it was considered by heathens a crime to be a Jew, and such upon examination as were found so, were cruelly treated, or put to death; attempted means to make it appear, that they had not been circumcised. To all such the Apostle speaks when he saith, let him not become uncircumcised. *In CHRIST JESUS, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, Galatians 6:15.* And on the other hand, if a Gentile from among the heathen world, be called by sovereign grace, to the knowledge of the LORD JESUS CHRIST; let him not be circumcised by way, as he may think, of being entitled to the Covenant made with *Abraham*; for this he is without it, Galatians 3:28-29. Circumcision was indeed an holy ordinance of GOD; and appointed to be observed by the whole house of Israel, under the severest penalties, Genesis 17:10-14. But as it was intended only as a sign and seal of a *better Covenant, established upon better promises*; it never was intended to minister any further, than unto the coming of CHRIST. It served as a shadow to Him. For it intimated the fall, and corruption of nature; and that *without shedding of blood there was no remission.* But when He came, who *by the one offering of himself once offered perfected for ever them that were sanctified*; this ordinance was done away. The substance being come, the shadow for ever ceased, Nay, indeed, it not only ceased to be necessary, but became improper. For, as circumcision had wholly an eye to CHRIST, whoever submitted to the rite after the coming of CHRIST, did virtually by the act call in question, either that CHRIST was come, or that his coming was the fulfillment of the whole law. Hence, the Apostle in another Scripture saith, that *if a man be circumcised, CHRIST shall profit him nothing*: that is, if he be

circumcised from not being satisfied with CHRIST'S obedience and death, as accomplishing redemption and becoming *the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*. See Galatians 5:2-3; Romans 10:4.

The Apostle makes use of the same kind of reasoning, respecting the several departments of social life: the servant with the master and the wife with her husband, and in short all the several railings of the world. All situations in civil society, provided the station be lawful, and honest, may be followed; for they have nothing to do with the grand concerns of salvation. He that is called in the LORD with an holy calling by sovereign grace, and is thereby proved to be of the family of CHRIST, bought with the precious price of CHRIST'S blood, and thereby redeemed from the Adam-nature fall, hath an infinitely higher concern, than the mere consideration of any worldly calling. The time here, is short. It is hardly worth a thought, what station of life a man is placed in, high or low, rich or poor; unless it were to seek that which might best promote the everlasting interests of the upper, and brighter world. Even the tender alliances in the charities of life: our continuance in them is so transitory, that we ought to sit as loose and detached from them as possible: and conscious that *here we have no continuing city*, we therefore ought to be always on the look out *in seeking, one to come*, Hebrews 13:14. I do not think it necessary to enlarge on several particulars set forth by the Apostle, towards the close of the Chapter; being in themselves sufficiently plain and obvious.

Reflections

READER! You and I shall read this Chapter of the Apostle's to no small improvement, if from what is here said in relation to the civil societies in common life, we make a spiritual reflection on that near, and dear union, which subsists between CHRIST and his Church. There can be no connection so near, none so dear, none so important, interesting, and durable; for it is for ever. All other unions die with the body. But CHRIST and his Church are one, to all eternity.

It may be very blessed to have an eye to this, in our forming connections in the marriage state; and to invite the LORD JESUS and his disciples to the wedding. And, with respect to the humble, or exalted state, in which the members of CHRIST'S body are placed, experience loudly confirms the truth every day; poverty, or riches, go but a little way, to frustrate, or promote, the real comforts of life. Where JESUS is, and where He forms the union, blessedness must follow, in the sanctified use of all dispensations.

Reader! do not overlook, or forget, the decision of the LORD by the Apostle in this Chapter, concerning ordinances. Circumcision or uncircumcision, with every other ordinance whatever, are in themselves nothing. Many of CHRIST'S redeemed ones now in glory, like the man JESUS took with him to Paradise from the cross; never enjoyed a single ordinance upon earth. And many, it is to be feared, who have had all the privileges of ordinances, know nothing of the GOD of ordinances to their souls joy. Reader! may it be your happiness, and mine, to form our conclusions upon the Apostle's standard, as regulated by the SPIRIT of GOD. *In CHRIST JESUS neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk*

according to this rule, peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of GOD, Amen.

Chapter 8

Contents

The Apostle in this Chapter, is treating on the Subject of Meats offered unto Idols. He very blessedly states the Privileges of the LORD'S People, in their Christian Liberty; but shews, with what Caution a Child of GOD ought to walk, so as not to wound a weak Brother.

1 Corinthians 8:1-6

(1) Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. (2) And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. (3) But if any man love God, the same is known of him. (4) As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that *there is* none other God but one. (5) For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) (6) But to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *are* all things, and we by him.

It should seem, from the opening of this Chapter, that the Apostle had been written to by the *Corinthians* on the subject, how far it became sinful to eat of the flesh which was offered unto idols. It should be remembered, that the *Corinthians*, by nature, and by practice, were idolaters: and as many of the LORD'S people, now formed into a Church at *Corinth*, had been before their conversion addicted to idolatry, and many with whom they were connected, were still under this delusion;

their minds, no doubt, were solemnly exercised upon the subject, and they therefore had written to the Apostle, to have his opinion upon it.

I beg the Reader to notice, and it is well worthy his attention, what occasion the Apostle took, from the question, and enquiry of the *Corinthians*, to settle this grand and fundamental point, of the glory of GOD in a threefold character of Person. He first shews that there is, there can be, no such thing in reality as an idol. Men may, and men do, frame to themselves a fiction of their brain, and call it an idol, or a god. But it only shews the darkened and depraved state of the human heart, in its present fallen state, which can take up with an idea, so ignorant, and stupid. The Apostle then proceeds to speak with all possible reverence, of the LORD GOD, in his revealed character, and offices, as existing in a threefold character of Persons. Beautifully he describes them, according to the revelation of Scripture: and particularly with an eye to their several distinct offices in the Covenant of grace. I need not dwell upon the subject, neither swell the pages of the *Poor Man's Commentary* in going over in this place, What more or less, is the sum and substance of the whole Bible. I rather refer to some of the more striking passages, which are in proof. See Matthew 3:17 and Commentary; Matthew 28:29; 1 John 5:7.

1 Corinthians 8:7-13

(7) Howbeit *there is* not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat *it* as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. (8) But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. (9) But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a

stumblingblock to them that are weak. (10) For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; (11) And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? (12) But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. (13) Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

There is somewhat very humbling to the soul, in what is said in the first verse of this paragraph: *there is not in every man that knowledge*. The Reader will recollect to whom the Apostle is writing, and of whom he speaks, namely, the Church; that is, truly regenerated Christians. They were called *with an holy calling*: 2 Timothy 1:9, had been made *partakers of the divine nature*, by a work of grace upon their souls: 1 Peter 1:3-4, and yet so small and inconsiderable was their knowledge in divine things, that they had not as yet attained to the clear conviction of what the Apostle had said before, to know *that an idol is nothing in the world*. From living amidst the society of heathens, who worshipped idols, and offered sacrifice to them, and from long prejudice in having themselves been educated in that way, they could not divest their minds from still retaining a somewhat of veneration for them; and instead of eating of the part of the same meat which the ignorant heathens offered to their idols, as common food, uninjured by their superstition and folly; and eating of it to shew, that they contemned the idol, and considered the meat perfectly pure from any pollution arising from their weakness who had offered it to the idol; they eat of it with a kind of religious fear, and awe, and thereby wounded their consciences, Romans 14:14.

As this first verse in the paragraph is humbling to the contemplation, in beholding the weakness of some timid souls in the divine life: so the next verse describes the strength of others, who like the Apostle could, and did, see the folly and sin of idols, and idolaters; and as such, looked upon the meat which was offered by those heathens as common food as pure after their folly had been acted upon, as it was before; and considered it with such perfect indifference, that whether they partook of the meat or not, it neither made them better, or worse.

But the Apostle very wisely and graciously took occasion, from the strength of understanding in the one, and the weakness in the other, to raise a subject of instruction, which not only became suited to the circumstances of those *Corinthians* upon this matter, but to the Church of GOD upon all other points, where a strength of knowledge in divine things, in some believers might be made beneficial, rather than injurious, to others, with respect to greater freedom, than timid minds might suppose proper upon numberless occasions. And the Apostle sets the subject in a striking point of view, by several arguments. It is as if he had said, let none of those who are strong in the grace that is in CHRIST JESUS think, that from the contempt they justly entertain for idols and idolatrous sacrifices, they may with impunity sit at meat among idolaters and even in their idol temple. This would be wrong, whatever private contempt they entertained in their heart against it. For a weak brother a follower of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, who saw it, and did not know what passed in the heart of his stronger brother, might form wrong conclusions therefrom, and have his conscience wounded. Never, adds the Apostle, would I eat

meat upon such conditions, lest I should make my brother to offend. For wounding one of CHRIST'S little ones, is wounding, CHRIST himself, as the LORD hath said, Zechariah 2:8. I beg the Reader to notice the expression of the Apostle in that verse, where he said: *And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom CHRIST died?* Not perish everlastingly, or even perish in time. For it is not possible, that any for whom CHRIST died can come into condemnation. So CHRIST himself long before had said. *My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish: neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand,* John 10:27-28. Neither can the sin of others affect the persons of CHRIST'S people. It may distress them, wound their minds, hurt their consciences; but not injure their interest in JESUS. But the sense is, shall a child of GOD be made unhappy, and his comforts destroyed, through the inattention of his brethren? And will you, said the Apostle, who are *strong* in grace, hurt a brother who is *weak*? Shall your very *knowledge*, being more than his, be so misapplied, as to become the very means of doing this? This were a breach of charity indeed, and a breach which cannot even plead ignorance in excuse; for it is induced from a perversion of better knowledge!

I shall have labored in my comments on this Chapter, to very little purpose, if the Reader, under divine teaching, is not led to look beyond the pale of the *Corinthian* Church as it then was, to what the Christian Church in every age hath been, and now is; as liable to errors creeping in, from the weakness and perversity of our poor fallen nature, in that corrupt part of it which grace doth not renew in the present life. Though

there may be no open idols, nor meats offered in sacrifice to idols, in the day in which we live and the land where we dwell; yet the stumbling blocks of iniquity which men put up before their face, the errors in doctrines, the customs and pleasurable pursuits of the world, and the profanation of things sacred, in the neglect of the LORD'S day, and numberless nameless offences, which distinguish the present CHRIST-despising, GOD dishonoring generation; call for great watchfulness among truly awakened, regenerated believers. If it was so, distressing to a weak mind, in the *Corinthian* Church, when he saw a brother whom he considered better taught than himself, in the temple of an idol; must it not now be offensive, to behold those who profess a love for our LORD JESUS CHRIST, mingling in society with those who deny his GODHEAD? Can that man be sincere in attachment to his LORD, who cordially takes by the hand those who are endeavoring by all the stratagems they can devise, to lessen CHRIST'S glory, and make the blood of the Covenant an unholy thing? Reader! the day is awful. Attempts are making in religion, to bring the iron and the clay together, and to fritter away the grand, and momentous truths of our most holy faith, in accommodation to what is called *rational* Christianity. It is considered marks of a narrow spirit, to *contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints*. In such a day, may the LORD make all his redeemed ones faithful. May every truly regenerated child of GOD be led by grace, to enter his protest against a timeserving spirit; but like the beloved Apostle *John*, bear testimony to the word of GOD'S grace, that *the SON of GOD is come*, and in proof of it hath given him *an understanding to know him that is true, and that he is in him that is true, even in his SON JESUS CHRIST. This is the true GOD, and eternal life.*

Little children keep yourselves from idols, Amen. 1 John 5:20-21.

Reflecons

Who that beholdeth CHRIST offering his precious soul an offering for sin, and by faith considers the vast and infinite importance of that offering, as it concerns his own soul, would ever after sit down in the idol's temple. And yet my brother, wherein doth the sin differ, when indifferency and coldness to CHRIST'S Person and interest in the Church distinguisheth the conduct of any of his professing followers? Surely the offence of the cross is not ceased. And a man must be singular indeed, in the present day of the Church, if like *Paul*, he glories in that cross, and offences do not come. Blessedly the Apostle hath marked it in this chapter. *But if any man love GOD, the same is known of him.* It is blessed to be known, blessed to be noticed, blessed to be reproached for his Name's sake. *Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word. Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my Name's sake, said, let the LORD be glorified; but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.*

Reader! let us seek grace to be faithful to GOD and to souls. And while the Lost) is making manifest his faithfulness in covenant-love, in the person, royalties, perfections, and finished salvation'of his dear SON; see that we offend not one of his little ones which trust *in* him, nor for a moment wound those for whom CHRIST died.

Chapter 9

Contents

The Apostle pleads the Dignity of his Office, and therefrom sheweth his Liberty. Ministers have a just Claim, and from the LORD'S Appointment, to be maintained in their Labors by the People. The Chapter is closed with comparing the Christian Life to a Race.

1 Corinthians 9:1-6

(1) Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord? (2) If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. (3) Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, (4) Have we not power to eat and to drink? (5) Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and *as* the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? (6) Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?

It Both not appear upon what ground it was, that, *Paul* considered himself called upon to use this language. He had the humblest opinion of himself, and ins another part of this Epistle, saith, that he was not meet to be called an Apostle, but was the least of all saints, 1 Corinthians 15:9. It is probable, that some had called in question his authority as an Apostle, and others had endeavored to lessen him in the eyes of the people, by making a comparison between him and *Peter* to *Paul's* prejudice. See 2 Corinthians 10:10. Alas! what is man in his highest attainment? To behold a Church of God made up of such members, who after a saving work of God hath been wrought upon the heart, yet from the remains of indwelling corruption, to be tempted to call in question the Apostolic, authority of *Paul*; yea, even the very man whom the LORD had given proofs of his being sent to them by the

LORD, in making his ministry useful to them! Reader! pause over the account. And let not faithful ministers be discouraged, nor even grieved, if at any time their services are little valued, when they behold so eminent an Apostle of CHRIST disesteemed, and by the very Church where he had the highest claim to their love and affection! Blessed servant of CHRIST! it was thy high honor in this instance, as in many others, to be conformed to the image of thy LORD!

But it will be well to run over the ground, in a cursory manner, of *Paul's* pretensions to the Apostleship. One grand feature of character, as an indispensable part in the qualification of an Apostle, settled in the College of the Apostles, was, that he should be *a witness to the resurrection of JESUS*, Acts 1:22. Now, that *Paul*, who, as he saith himself, was like one born out of due time, might have this qualification; it is worthy our closest observation, that the LORD JESUS granted *Paul* this mercy; in appearing personally to him at his conversion, Acts 9:3-6. Add to this, *Paul* had another interview with CHRIST, when in a trance at *Jerusalem*, Acts 22:17-21. And a *third* when confined in the castle, Acts 23:10-11. And, *fourthly*, when he was caught up to the third heaven. It is not, indeed, expressly said that he then saw the LORD JESUS; but it is very highly probable (2 Corinthians 12:1-4), these fully qualified hint as a witness to the Resurrection for the Apostleship.

And it was a further confirmation of the character of an Apostle, his being called to the office by CHRIST himself. For at his conversion, JESUS declared concerning him *to Ananias*, that he was a *chosen vessel unto him, to bear his name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel*, Acts 9:15. And

Paul's account of himself, when writing to the Romans, was that he was *called to be as Apostle*, Romans 1:1.

And to add no more. The ordination *of Paul by the HOLY GHOST*, Acts 13:2. and the success of his ministry to the Gentiles at large, and the *Corinthians* to whom he was now writing in particular; all these things carried, with them a decided testimony of his Apostleship. Reader! it would be well, if men, in modern times, could produce such credentials of their high calling. Alas! what multitudes, it is to be apprehended, by what we see and meet with in life, will be proved in the end of the day to have run unsent. *Paul* hath described them in his second Epistle to *Corinth*. The portrait is too striking to be mistaken, and too awful not to excite distress, 2 Corinthians 11:13.

1 Corinthians 9:7-14

(7) Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? (8) Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? (9) For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? (10) Or saith he *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. (11) If we have sown unto you spiritual things, *is it* a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? (12) If others be partakers of *this* power over you, *are* not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. (13) Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live *of the things* of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? (14) Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

The Apostle possessed a great mind. He wrought at one time, and worked as a tent maker, that he might not be chargeable to any man for the mere common necessities of life, Acts 18:3. He felt, as every generous mind cannot but feel, that it is painful to be beholden to be maintained by others, when the LORD hath enabled a man to get his own bread. But it might so happen, that *Paul's* trade of tent-making might not always be in request. And, if so, it was hard, when preaching was over, and hunger sharp, that no one would ask him to eat. The Apostle, therefore, reasons upon the subject, *If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?* Reader! what a wonderful subject will be opened at the last day, when it will be found, that *some*, truly sent, and truly ordained servants of CHRIST have labored in the word and doctrine, and been blest of GOD, and made blessed to the LORD'S people, and yet wanted the daily supply of the bread that perished; while others, unordained of GOD, and sent only of men, have wallowed in all the indulgence of ease and affluence, and fed themselves, but not the flock. Ezekiel 34:8.

1 Corinthians 9:15-18

(15) But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for *it were* better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. (16) For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! (17) For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation *of the gospel* is committed unto me. (18) What is my reward then? *Verily* that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

The imagination cannot furnish to itself a more beautiful picture of disinterestedness, than is here set forth of the Apostle *Paul*. He was not arguing for himself, for he would rather have died, than that it should have been said, he preached for filthy lucre sake. But he was contending for others. He felt distress that any of GOD'S faithful ministers should lack the bread that perisheth, while dispensing the bread that endureth to everlasting life. But, as to himself, he sought not profit, but usefulness to souls. Oh! what a contrast to those who receive, but not give; who mind earthly things, and not heavenly. *Paul* knew that he served a bountiful Master, and that his LORD would not suffer him to want, while giving out to his people. But he that looks at the profit, and regards not the fold, will have a woeful account to render in, when the Chief Shepherd appears!

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

(19) For though I be free from all *men*, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. (20) And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; (21) To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. (22) To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some. (23) And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with *you*.

It must not be supposed, from these expressions of the Apostle that he was a time-serving man, for he had before declared, that it was the Gospel which he preached, and that *a woe would be unto him, if he preached not the Gospel*. But the sense is, that he explained the Gospel to the Jew upon

Jewish principles, and to them that were without law as without law, the Gospel superseding the law by the finished salvation of the LORD JESUS CHRIST; meaning, that in CHRIST JESUS, *neither circumcision availed any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.* Paul preached wholly CHRIST, knowing, *that if righteousness came by the law, then CHRIST was dead in vain,* Galatians 2:21. So that this kind, accommodating spirit, never relinquished a single point of importance in the Gospel, but only enabled the Apostle to address himself to his several hearers, as might best come up to their apprehension of divine things, and to gain and gather out the LORD'S people in every place, and among every class, wheresoever he found them. Sweet pattern for ministers, while studying to shew themselves approved of GOD!

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

(24) Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. (25) And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. (26) I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: (27) But I keep under my body, and bring *it* into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

The figure which the Apostle hath here made use of, to draw a comparison by of the Christian warfare, is as beautiful as it is just, and as much suited to the present hour, as it was in the days of the Apostle. The ground and space of this life, in which the Christian race is ran, corresponds to what is marked out, both in the boundary and the time limited to the Grecian games, and have their determination alike to him that wins. But the pastimes of this world differ widely from the serious concerns of another. And, as in the things themselves, so in

the issue. There was but one successful candidate in the earthly race. But in the heavenly, all that run in CHRIST, the Way, the truth, and the life, are alike successful. Moreover, he that ran in the earthly warfare, and came off victorious, soon yielded himself to the conqueror death. But he that wins CHRIST, and is found in him, subdues for ever all that opposed him, and wears his crown forever. Hence, all the victors in CHRIST exalt in the same hymn of praise: *blessed be the God and FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us unto a lively hope by the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away*, Peter 1:3-4.

I beg the Reader to notice what the Apostle saith of himself, of keeping under his body, and bringing it into subjection. By which he could not be supposed to mean the mere animal flesh, by fastings, and the punishment of stripes, and scourging, and penance, and the like, which tend more to create spiritual pride and peevishness, than induce any reformation of the heart. *Paul* knew too well human nature to recommend such things. Besides, it is the corruption of the heart he desired to bring under, and which no doubt he sought for to accomplish, in mortifying the deeds of the body by the HOLY GHOST, as he recommended to others, Romans 8:13. And the motive *Paul* had in view, is a confirmation of his meaning, *lest* (said he) *that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway*; that is, lest from some corruption of his fallen nature, indulged, and rising up in rebellion to his renewed and better part; he should fall into some foul transgression, as *David* did; and, as

this would tempt the enemy to blaspheme, as it did in the case of the Psalmist, the LORD should lay him aside from his public ministry, like a vessel in a family, which though once in continued use, was now no longer called for. Such a thought was dreadfully painful to the active and zealous mind of the Apostle, and, therefore, he desired eternal grace from the SPIRIT, to keep under the body of sin and death, which he well knew he carried about with him, and under which he groaned, being burdened. This appears to be the evident sense and meaning of the Apostle's words. Some, however, have ventured to give this passage a different construction, as if the Apostle feared, that, if falling into sin from the corruptions of the body, he might be cast out of GOD'S presence for ever. A thing totally foreign to all the Apostle's uniform doctrine, and daily profession of his everlasting safety in CHRIST, JESUS had declared him to have been *a chosen vessel*; and *Paul* had assured every Church of his interest *in* CHRIST, and union *with* CHRIST. *Being confident of this very thing*, (said he to the Church at *Philippi*,) *that he which hath begun a good work will perform it unto the day of* CHRIST, *Philippians 1:6. I know*, (said he to *Timothy*,) *whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the LORD the righteous Judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing,* 2 Timothy 1:12 and 2 Timothy 4:7-8. Under such, well grounded and well formed assurances, it is impossible that the Apostle could have entertained the smallest apprehensions of being finally lost. And, as hath been shewn,

the words could mean no other, than that he dreaded that from human infirmities, he might be laid aside from usefulness, to the very end of his life, in his LORD'S service. And I hope the Reader will also here from learn, that such holy jealousies as *Paul* here expressed, and the LORD'S people many of them know, are not at all inconsistent with the perfect safety at the same time; in which they are considered, according to the election of grace. It is the sweetest of all thoughts that as their original call to salvation resulted not from their own merit, so neither their final safety depends upon their improvement of grace. The LORD'S everlasting love, and the consequent call which in time followed, was neither bestowed for human deserving, nor preserved for human improvements. Every thing in the Covenant flows from the LORD'S purpose, will, and pleasure. What will exalt the divine glory in promoting the happiness of his people. And, as it is a Covenant *ordered in all things and sure*; so JEHOVAH undertakes the accomplishment of it, both for himself and them. *I will not turn away from them to do them good: but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me*, Jeremiah 32:40.

Reflections

GREAT Apostle of our LORD JESUS CHRIST! The Church of GOD will hail thee, in all generations, as the faithful servant of the LORD. Truly thou didst see the LORD JESUS, and didst become a witness to his resurrection. Truly the seal of thine Apostleship, the Churches in CHRIST, are in the LORD. And all the Churches of the saints, in all ages, and generations, find cause to bless the LORD for thy ministry. Yea! we of the present hour, are

reaping daily mercies, through the grace of GOD the HOLY GHOST, for thy labors in the Church of *Corinth*.

Blessed JESUS! while running the race which is set before us, we would be everlastingly looking unto thee, the Author and Finisher of our faith. And, while the world is engaged in the empty and unsatisfying chase of life, may it be the portion of thy redeemed family, to be always following after thee, forgetting things which are behind, and reaching forth to those which are before, and thus to press towards the mark of the high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS. And do thou, LORD, so bless thy people with the sweet influences of thine HOLY SPIRIT, that we may mortify the deeds of the body and live. And JESUS himself will keep his redeemed from falling, and present them faultless in his own spotless righteousness before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy.

Chapter 10

Contents

The Apostle is here explaining some of the Events of the Church in the Wilderness, as Types of the New Testament Dispensation. He sweetly discourseth on the Subject of the Lord's Supper.

1 Corinthians 10:1-12

(1) Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; (2) And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; (3) And did all eat the same spiritual meat; (4) And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

(5) But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. (6) Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. (7) Neither be ye idolaters, as *were* some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. (8) Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. (9) Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. (10) Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. (11) Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. (12) Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

It is a very sure and blessed truth, that the Gospel was preached to the old Church, as well as unto the new. To our FATHERS in type and shadow; to us in sum and substance, Galatians 3:8. And very blessed it is, when under the HOLY GHOST'S teaching, we can read the one through the other. For, it not only thereby proves, that one uniform design runs through both Testaments of Scripture, from beginning to end, that CHRIST is both *the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth*, and *the LAMB slain from the foundation of the World*; but that GOD the HOLY GHOST hath presided as the Almighty LORD and Minister of his Church through all ages. He that called light out of darkness in the old creation, is the same that commandeth the light from darkness in the new creation of the soul, in every individual instance of his people, *to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of GOD in the face of JESUS CHRIST*, Romans 10:4; Revelation 13:8; Genesis 1:3; 2 Corinthians 4:6.

The Apostle opens this chapter to the Church, whom he calls *brethren*, to shew their right and interest in what he was

about to deliver to them, as distinguished from the world, and calls upon them to be informed of what concerned them highly to know; namely, that the Gospel was very early preached to the Church, even from their first formation as a Church, on coming up out of Egypt. And, Reader! it is our mercy from this sweet scripture of the HOLY GHOST to learn some very blessed things, which without it, we should not so plainly have understood. Who could have thought, but for this divine teaching, that the pillar of the cloud, which acted in a double capacity, both for light by day, and a screen by night, had an allusion to CHRIST, and the blessed leadings of his HOLY GHOST graciously condescended to have given the Church his own illustration of the whole, to his glory and our joy? Very sweet and blessed, indeed, are those scriptures on those subjects, and we never can be sufficiently thankful to the HOLY GHOST for them, since they not only serve to throw a light over the whole of the eventful Scriptures of the Old Testament, but most decidedly shew to us, that from the first dawn of revelation to the consummation of all things, one and the same dispensation of grace hath been uniformly carried on, in manifesting His blessed and Almighty Person JESUS CHRIST, *who is the same, yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*

But what I beg the Reader particularly to remark with me, is what the Apostle had in commission from the Holy GHOST to teach the Church, that all that came out of Egypt by *Moses*, were not alike interested, in those precious things. *With many of them*, this Scripture saith, *GOD was not well pleased; and they were overthrown in the wilderness.* And the reason is elsewhere explained. *All are not Israel which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham are they all*

children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called, Romans 9:6-7. The visible Church then, as the visible Church now, which consisteth only of outward privileges, may be, and indeed are, common things, and enjoyed in common with those who have no real lot nor part in the matter. Thus we are told, that beside six hundred thousand on foot beside children, that went up out of Egypt, a mixed multitude went up also with them, Exodus 12:37-38.

It should be well understood, therefore, to avoid all possible misapprehensions, that when GOD is speaking of his people, it is a distinction of character infinitely higher, than can be discovered by mere outward things. All the whole earth is the LORD'S; and as the Creator, every thing in it is his. But there is a title of property; and peculiarity, by which the LORD hath marked the people taken into Covenant in CHRIST concerning whom the LORD specially saith: *This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise, Isaiah 43:21.* I humbly conceive, it will form the best spiritual improvement of this sweet Scripture, under GOD the SPIRIT'S teaching, if we look a little closer into those features of character, by which they are discoverable, from the mere outward visible Church, which all men possess in common, and which from having no real Covenant interest in CHRIST, are daily productive of the same consequences as are spoken of here, *are overthrown in the wilderness.*

And first, let the Reader observe, how the LORD'S Israel are marked. The LORD saith, that he hath set them apart for himself. They were chosen in CHRIST before the foundation of the world, Ephesians 1:4. And during the time-state of the Church, they are *called with an holy calling*; not according to

their works, but according to his own purpose and grace, *given them in CHRIST JESUS before the world began*, 2 Timothy 1:9. So that He who chose them before the world began as his Israel, appointed for them also the grace for an effectual calling of them in time; by *giving them that grace in CHRIST*, which therefore must be *sure to all the seed*, Romans 4:16. And hence *Peter* was taught by the HOLY GHOST, to remind the Church, how they should judge of their interest and safety in CHRIST, by giving all diligence *to make their calling and election sure*. For if they could prove their calling, the certainty of their election must be proved also; for the one is included in the other: 2 Peter 1:10-11. See Deuteronomy 32:8-12. GOD'S true Israel, therefore, are marked with these distinguishing features of character. They are set apart, called, awakened, regenerated, and manifested to be the children of GOD, by adoption, and grace: while the mere nominal Israel, though in the visible Church, and apparently enjoying the same privileges, remain in unbelief, darkness, and the shadow of death. The LORD'S own account of them is: *they do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I sware in wrath; they shall not enter into my rest*, Psalm 95:7; Hebrews 3:10-11.

Secondly. The LORD'S Israel of the present hour are as truly brought up out of spiritual Egypt, as the LORD'S Israel were of old from the bondage of natural Egypt. They have felt, and do feel; the plague of their own heart; and the wormwood, and the gall, of a bondage state. The corruption of a fallen sinful state, both in original and actual transgression, drink up their spirits. And therefore, when the LORD speaks to them now, as he did to Moses of old: *I have seen, I have seen the affliction*

of my people which is in Egypt; and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them, Acts 7:34. In every individual instance of a soul brought out of darkness and the shadow of death; and brought through the red sea of blood; the typical representation *Egypt's* history then furnished, is truly realized, and the design of GOD the HOLY GHOST in that shadowy dispensation, through grace is seen.

Thirdly. The LORD'S Israel are as truly known now, as was then, in the being brought into a wilderness state, and being distinguished from all other people; amidst their wilderness dispensations, in the pillar of the cloud going before them by day, and the pillar of fire surrounding them by night. Distinguishing grace marks the whole path, all the way through. Every thing around them, about them, in them, and by them; sets forth the manifestation of the LORD'S care over them. *The sun doth not smite them by day, neither the moon by night.* So that every child of GOD may say now, as truly as *Moses* did then, when summing up their history: *Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD!* Deuteronomy 33:29.

And what I beg the Reader in this view of the subject, is to mark the distinguishing properties of the grace bestowed upon Israel in the old Church in the Wilderness; and the Israel now, under the common mercies of the visible Church then, had the *pillar the cloud, the manna, and the water,* with all the other means and ordinances; it was only the true Israel of GOD which enjoyed the spiritual blessings. In like manner, in the present hour, the outward privileges nationally considered, are in common to all that are called *Israel;* but the spiritual seed of *Jacob* only, are blessed with the spiritual

enjoyment of them. The whole camp of *Israel* was victualled from Heaven with the *Manna*, day by day; and all partook of the water which flowed from the Rock that followed them. But, none saw CHRIST in the Manna, nor in the Rock, but GOD'S true Israel. So, in the present hour, the multitude receive the Gospel in all the outward ordinances of it, but behold not JESUS in his ordinances. They live in the use of them, not by faith on CHRIST, but on themselves and their duties, and their own improvements, as they call them; and in the midst of all, have no apprehension of JESUS. And, as the carcasses of the unbelievers, as here described, fell in the wilderness; some by idolatry, some by fornication, some by murmuring: so now, who shall calculate what multitudes die, unawakened, unregenerated, unrenewed, in the very midst of ordinances, after the same example of unbelief, Hebrews 4:11.

I detain the Reader one moment longer, just to observe, on that striking verse, of those who are said *to have tempted* CHRIST in the wilderness, that it becomes a most decided testimony in proof that CHRIST is He whom *Stephen* spake of which was in the Church in the Wilderness, Acts 7:38. And also, it as decidedly proves CHRIST to be GOD. For *Moses*, in relating this event, expressly called him so. *Wherefore do ye* (saith he) *tempt the LORD?* Exodus 17:2. Precious testimony by the way.

1 Corinthians 10:13-15

(13) There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*. (14) Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. (15) I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.

This is a very sweet Scripture, and hath been found truly refreshing and consolatory to GOD'S children, in all their exercises. JESUS too well loves his people, to suffer any temptations to be brought upon them, but what he himself knows shall minister to his glory, and their welfare. And what endears the thought yet more, he is with them in all, and supports them under all, and will bring them through all, Deuteronomy 33:27; Hebrews 2:17-18.

1 Corinthians 10:16-22

(16) The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? (17) For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. (18) Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? (19) What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? (20) But *I say*, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. (21) Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. (22) Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

There is somewhat particularly striking and solemn in this account of the Lord's Supper. *Paul* calls the service the cup of blessing, and the communion of the blood of CHRIST; and the bread broken, the communion of the body of CHRIST; evidently meaning, that all truly regenerated believers, which partake in that feast, being a feast upon the sacrifice, are virtually considered by that act of faith as partaking by

fellowship in all the blessings, and benefits of CHRIST'S S death. The bread and the cup being one, and all and every individual partaking in the same, manifest thereby, their oneness, and union with CHRIST as CHRIST; and their interest, in all that belongs to CHRIST, as CHRIST. And the inference the Apostle draws from it, is also as striking. If by this solemn service, believers desire to testify their oneness with CHRIST; it is impossible after that, that any could be found in the idol's temple. *Paul* speaks of it with a kind of abhorrence. *Can any man drink of the cup of the LORD, and the cup of devils? Can any man be partaker of the LORD'S table, and of the table of devils.* Reader! we have no idol sacrifices, no form of religion in this country, where such horrid services are performed. But we have tantamount to graven images, in the follies, and pleasures, which the ungodly and carnal part of mankind, are earnest to mingle up with the mere rituals of worship. And, when we find many, who regularly fill their places at the LORD'S table, and as regularly fill their places in the synagogue of Satan, I mean public amusements and diversions; wherein do such differ from the characters the Apostle reprobates in those verses? How very plain and evident is it, therefore, that nothing can lay the foundation for communion with the LORD, but a pre-union with his Person, and an interest in his blood and righteousness. We must be first married to his Person, or there can be no right to any dowry in what belongs to him. First grafted into CHRIST, as the spiritual vine; or we can bring forth no fruit, as branches in him. The members of the body must he really and truly united to the head, or all vital influence is wanting. I hope the Reader knows by this heartfelt enjoyment, for it is most blessed. And when communion with CHRIST ariseth from an union with CHRIST, and the soul of

a believer hath not only an habitual state of grace within, but an actual exercise in going forth in desires after CHRIST, and incomings of blessing from CHRIST; when prayers go up, and answers come down, and the LORD makes all his goodness pass before us; then a child of GOD enters into a real soul enjoyment of the Apostle's word: and can truly say, that the cup of blessing, and the bread broken, open sweet communion by faith, both of the body and blood of CHRIST.

1 Corinthians 10:23-33

(23) All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. (24) Let no man seek his own, but every man another's *wealth*. (25) Whatsoever is sold in the meat market, *that* eat, asking no question for conscience sake: (26) For the earth *is* the Lord's, and the fullness thereof. (27) If any of them that believe not bid you *to a feast*, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. (28) But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth *is* the Lord's, and the fullness thereof: (29) Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another *man's* conscience? (30) For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? (31) Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. (32) Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: (33) Even as I please all *men* in all *things*, not seeking mine own profit, but the *profit* of many, that they may be saved.

I do not think it necessary to detain the Reader with any particular observations on those verses. Every thing in them is plain, and obvious. But I would just remark, what a blessed frame of mind, that regenerated child of GOD must be in, who can always keep in view, and through grace act upon it, what the Apostle hath said, in a general comprehensive manner, of

all actions. *Whatsoever we do, whether we eat or drink, to do all to the glory of GOD.* This, if followed, would make our most ordinary meals carry with them a savoriness that would be sacramental. And very certain it is, that many a blessed believer, from the unction of the HOLY GHOST, enjoys more of JESUS at his own table, than all unregenerated persons do of JESUS at the LORD'S table. And it must be so. For how shall a soul unawakened, bear and know the joyful sound? How shall a soul dead in trespasses and sins, perform a living act of faith upon a living SAVIOR, or spiritually eat of the body and blood of CHRIST? But he that bottoms every thing upon CHRIST, makes CHRIST what JEHOVAH hath made him, the first and the last, the Author and Finisher of salvation: this truly regenerated believer hath GOD'S glory in view, in all the acts of providence and grace; in ordinances, and all the means of social and godly life. This is what the Apostle elsewhere calls, *the knowledge of the love of CHRIST, which passeth all understanding, and being filled with all the fulness of GOD,* Ephesians 3:19.

Reflections

WHO would have thought, on reading *Israel's* history in coming up out of Egypt, that all the great outlines of CHRIST'S Church is here shadowed forth? Yes! my soul, thy deliverance from the worse than Egyptian bondage of sin and death, of Satan's captivity and prison-house, was here represented. As all our father's in the Church were baptized unto *Moses*, as the LORD'S minister, in the cloud, and in the sea; ate and drank of the spiritual sustenance, by faith in CHRIST; and eyed CHRIST as the sum and substance of all: so thou, by the same

faith in the same GOD and SAVIOR, art now passing through the same wilderness dispensations; and fetching strength for every new exercise by living on JESUS, and of his fulness receiving *grace for grace*. Oh! GOD the HOLY GHOST, bring me under thy continual baptisms! Let my spiritual life in CHRIST, be maintained, as the faithful *Israelites* were, by the same spiritual meat; and let My soul's thirst be continually satisfied in drinking of the same spiritual drink; for He that went before in the pillar of the cloud, and that followed them in the pillar of the fire, is the same LORD JESUS to me, as them; even the Rock whose work is perfect, just as true is He! Precious LORD JESUS! do I not know? hast thou not taught me? that all grace for thy whole family here, and all glory for thy redeemed above, is treasured up, and hath been treasured up, in thine Almighty Person, as the Covenant-head and Husband of thy Church from all eternity?

Sweet cup of blessing in my Lord's Supper! may it be my holy joy and delight often to take thee. For surely, it is an ordinance of JESUS' own appointing. And He who appointed it at the first, promised to be present at every celebration, and will continue to the last, to make it sanctified to every true partaker. Surely it is among the love-tokens of JESUS. He will be always there where his people are assembled. We shall feed on Him by faith. And we shall know heartfelt experience, while the King sitteth at his table, and this grace of our souls, which he himself hath given, and calleth forth into exercise, is like the spikenard, that the cup of blessing which we bless is indeed rich communion with the blood of CHRIST; and the bread we break is indeed precious communion of the body of CHRIST! Oh! for the sweet

quickenings of GOD the SPIRIT leading to the feast, that my soul may be often taking the cup of salvation, and calling upon the name of the LORD. And do thou, dearest LORD, so lead, so guide, so daily, hourly, momentarily, bring my soul under thy blessed teachings, and influences; that in providences as well as seasons of grace, at my own table or at the LORD'S, wherever I am, however employed, in the Church or in the market place, in dealings with men, or sweet communion with the LORD; *whatsoever do, in word, or deed, do all to the glory of GOD, in the name of JESUS CHRIST.*

Chapter 11

Contents

The Apostle is giving Instructions in the opening of this Chapter. He enters somewhat more largely in treating of the Lord's Supper and very sweetly discourseth upon it.

1 Corinthians 11:1-16

(1) Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ. (2) Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered *them* to you. (3) But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Christ *is* God. (4) Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered, dishonoreth his head. (5) But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with *her* head uncovered dishonoreth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. (6) For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. (7) For a man indeed ought not to cover *his* head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. (8) For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. (9) Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for

the man. (10) For this cause ought the woman to have power on *her* head because of the angels. (11) Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. (12) For as the woman *is* of the man, even so *is* the man also by the woman; but all things of God. (13) Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? (14) Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? (15) But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for *her* hair is given her for a covering. (16) But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

We never can sufficiently admire the grace given to the Apostle, as a minister of the LORD JESUS, for that it enabled him to win the affections of the people in attending to his exhortation and reproofs, *He that winneth souls is wise*. And much of that wisdom which is from above, a minister should pray for, that he may endear himself to his people before that he can hope that they will attend to what he hath to say. How very affectionately the Apostle opens this Chapter on this ground, desiring the *Corinthian* Church to follow him, but as he followed CHRIST.

It should seem from what *Paul* hath here dwelt upon, in relation to the covering of the head of the men, or women, in seasons of worship; that the custom of the Church in those days, was somewhat particular. A decency of apparel, is all that is necessary to be observed. The Apostle *Peter*, hath given in one short verse or two, a sufficient direction for all holy women, to observe, in their dress, who profess godliness. *Whose adorning* (saith he) *let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel. But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament*

of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of GOD of great price, 1 Peter 3:3- 4.

But, methinks, I would take occasion, from the infirmities of the Church at *Corinth*, and from the infirmities of the Church of GOD *in* all ages, to gather improvement, in hearing what JESUS saith to his Church on the subject in contemplating the beauties of his Church, made comely by the comeliness he had put upon her. *Behold!* (saith CHRIST,) *thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair! thou has doves eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Mount Gilead,* Song of Solomon 4:1. Now as the hair grows on the head, and depends upon it: so the Church is grafted on CHRIST, and derives every thing of life and nourishment from him. And, as the hair is ornamental, so CHRIST'S Church is the glory of the world; the preservation of which wholly ariseth from the concern CHRIST hath for his Church, in the world. And, as the hair is not only ornamental, but useful, and forms a covering to preserve from baldness: so CHRIST'S Church is covered with the robe of her LORD'S righteousness, and the garment of his salvation. Well may the LORD'S people be compared to *a flock of goats on Mount Gilead;* for the Church, like that goodly mountain, is on high, and stands fruitful, as well as exalted, in the LORD'S righteousness. Numerous they are, like the hairs of the head; but very lovely and graceful. JESUS so highly esteems them, that he saith, they shall be his when he cometh to *number his jewels, and to spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him,* Malachi 3:17.

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

(17) Now in this that I declare *unto you* I praise *you* not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. (18) For first

of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. (19) For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. (20) When ye come together therefore into one place, *this* is not to eat the Lord's Supper. (21) For in eating every one taketh before *other* his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. (22) What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise *you* not. (23) For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread: (24) And when he had given thanks, he broke *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. (25) After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me. (26) For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. (27) Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. (28) But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. (29) For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. (30) For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. (31) For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. (32) But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. (33) Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. (34) And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

We can never be sufficiently thankful to our gracious GOD, for this portion of his holy word, on the subject of the Lord's Supper. The improper administration of the sacred Supper, among the *Corinthians*, gave occasion to the Apostle, to state the order of it at large, as he hath here done: and GOD the SPIRIT, I say, be praised, for this invaluable record concerning

it. The *first* thing of importance concerning the holy Supper, which we here learn, is, that the thing itself is of CHRIST'S express institution. This I conceive to be a matter of high moment. For, although the LORD JESUS appointed the service to his disciples, (who were the representatives of the Church,) as a standing memorial, to be observed by his followers, and without any further record, had nothing more been said concerning it, than the LORD'S appointment upon that memorable occasion; this would have been enough, it ought indeed, to have been enough to endear it, and recommend it for ever, to the faithful: yet had not the LORD again taught his servant *Paul* what is here related, and GOD the HOLY GHOST caused it to be handed down in the Church by those written records, we should not have known how highly JESUS prized it, and how many and various the blessings the LORD intended to communicate, in the faithful observance of it to his people. I pray the Reader not to lose sight of this, in his view of the Lord's Supper.

Secondly. It is worthy the Reader's observation, that though it is not said when it was that the LORD JESUS so directed the Apostle *Paul*, concerning the holy Supper; yet very certain it is, that what he delivered to the Church on the subject, he had immediately from JESUS himself. So it is written. *For (saith Paul) I have received of the LORD that which also I delivered unto you.* And then he describes the order of the solemn service. Nay, there is somewhat very highly important to observe in what the Apostle saith, not only as it relates to the service itself, but as to the manner of celebrating it. For though the LORD JESUS, when at the supper with his disciples, instituted it, and superseded the Jewish Passover, and

commanded its perpetual observance; yet the LORD gave no form, neither prescribed any order, or method, how they should celebrate it. Hence this relation of *Paul* becomes doubly blessed, because the LORD who gave it to his servant, gave him at the same time, those directions how it should be observed by the faithful. Some have been curious to enquire, When it was, that the LORD JESUS so taught *Paul* concerning it. But the HOLY GHOST is silent on the subject. It is not likely to have been at his conversion, for the LORD then sent him to *Ananias* to be baptized. But it might have been when he was in a trance, Acts 18:9 or Acts 22:17, or when in the prison: Acts 23:11, or at sea: Acts 27:23, or when caught up to the third Heaven: 2 Corinthians 12:1-4. But it is not so material to enquire *when* it was, as to be convinced of the certainty of it, that it really is; and this *Paul* certifies with strong expressions, when he saith: *For I received of the LORD that which also I delivered unto you.* From this account of the Apostle, I venture to conclude, that that form of administration, which approacheth nearest to this standard, is most Scriptural.

Thirdly. From the very sweet and affectionate statement in the LORD'S name, by his servant *Paul*, (and as it should seem, purposely given that he might inform the Church of it,) that as oft as his people in a sacramental service eat the bread, and drink the cup, they do shew forth the LORD'S death till he come; nothing can be more plain, than that it is the LORD'S pleasure, that his people should often meet in his name, for this holy purpose. And that the Church of GOD, from the first descent of the HOLY GHOST, considered it so, is also evident, for we are told, that they *continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house:* by

which we understand, celebrating the holy Supper of the LORD, Acts 2:46. Flow little apprehensions must those persons have, either of the solemn service itself; or of the design of its institution, who receive it but seldom, lest they should lose their reverence for it; and thereby manifest their total ignorance both of the LORD of the Supper, and as a communion in the benefits of it by faith? Reader! what saith your knowledge of the LORD, and the enjoyment of the LORD, at his Supper? The Church of old cried out: *While the King sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.* Song of Solomon 1:12. It is very blessed, when at the LORD'S table, or in the LORD'S house, or in *our* own, the graces of the Holy SPIRIT which the LORD hath planted in the soul, are going forth in lively actings of faith, upon the Person, work, blood-shedding, and righteousness, of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. Oh! who shall calculate, the incomings of CHRIST'S love, and the out-goings of praise, in such hallowed seasons? Who shall tell what passeth between CHRIST and his spouse; the LORD and his people, when JESUS comes in to see the guests at his table; and they are found waiting their LORD'S approach, in the wedding garment of his righteousness? Who shall describe the feelings of those redeemed souls, who, while JESUS sheweth his hands, and his side, breaks to them the bread, and gives to them the cup of salvation; opens their hearts, warms their affections, cheers their spirits, and makes them sensible of a gracious welcome; when by faith they hear the LORD say: *Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!* Song of Solomon 5:1. Could any child of GOD, whose soul is truly regenerated, and hath felt the sweetness of the ordinance at the Supper, ever keep from the table, or use it sparingly? Blessed LORD! I praise thy holy Name, for so

precious a love-token of thy favor. May it be my portion, to be often crying out with the Church: *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flocks to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions,* Song of Solomon 1:7.

I must not take leave of this interesting subject, without first noticing what the Apostle hath said, respecting the irreverent manner in which the *Corinthians* observed the Lord's Supper.

It appears, from the statement given by the Apostle, that the *Corinthians* had somewhat of a feast, before they celebrated the Lord's Supper. For he speaks of it, and saith: *When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, every one taketh before other his own supper, and one is hungry, and another is drunken.* Now this could not be the Supper of the LORD. *Some* have thought, and perhaps the idea is well founded, that those who did this, were persons who had been converted to Christianity, but like the Church of *Galatea*, were much attached to Jewish customs, and therefore kept up also the observance of the *Passover*. And from not having been savingly converted to the faith by regeneration, had made too free with the good things of the feast, and were in an awful state of drunkenness, when they attended the celebration of the Lord's Supper, which followed. *Others* have supposed, that this feast of the *Corinthians*, was a *love feast*, instituted to bring together into the bands of mutual love, and affection, the several members of CHRIST'S body; that so by partaking in one common feast, they might be reminded of their equality: notwithstanding their different ranks, of poor and rich, that they all alike stood in need of one common salvation; and as such, ate and drank

together, in one common meal, and from thence went hand in hand to present themselves before the table of the LORD, In either case, it presents us with a melancholy picture of the fallen, and corrupt state of our poor nature. Probably this feast was provided for according to the circumstances of the people. The rich sent in plenty. The poor who had nothing of consequence, provided nothing. And therefore, while the *former*, assuming on their right, ate and drank to the full; the *latter*, in modesty kept back and the effect was as the Apostle states, while one was hungry, another was drunken.

And, what tended to heighten yet more the enormity of the offence, was, that it was done in the house of GOD. This is evident, from the Apostle's reproof. *What? have ye not houses to eat and drink in: or despise ye the church of GOD?* Reader! think what an awful perversion of all sacred things, when, even under the cover of religion, such abuses prevailed!

It will be highly proper to consider, what the Apostle hath said in relation to the unworthy participation of the Lord's Supper; and more especially, as many of GOD'S children, from a misconception of the subject have taken the words of the Apostle in a very different light from what, as is evidently the case, the Apostle meant them. For the better apprehension of the whole of what *Paul* hath said upon this most interesting subject, I would beg to state the Apostle's words under each particular. *Paul* saith, that *whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the LORD unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the LORD.* And again: *For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation, (or, as the margin of the Bible renders it, judgment,) to himself,*

not discerning the LORD'S body. These are very strong expressions. And the question is to what extent, according to the general sense of Scripture do they refer?

An unworthy participation in the Supper of the LORD cannot, in the nature of the thing, imply such guilt in the body and blood of the LORD, as those who imbrued their hands, in the death of CHRIST; for that is impossible. Neither is it to be supposed, that by the unworthy receiving in the *Corinthian* Church, the Apostle considered any there, who either had once acknowledged the faith of CHRIST, and now denied him; for then it is to be supposed, that in this case, they would not have shewn themselves to the table of the LORD. Neither can we imagine, that any of those *Corinthians* were of that class of persons, whom the same Apostle speaks of in his Epistle to the Hebrews, who despised the blood of the Covenant, and thought highly of it; for neither in this sense can we suppose such characters to be found at the Lord's Supper, Hebrews 10:29. We must look for some other marks of distinction; which may be supposed to have reference to the receiving the Lord's Supper unworthily, so as to be considered guilty of the body and blood of the LORD.

And I think it very possible, that the Apostle had in view among the *Corinthians*, such as made light of the holy Supper, reduced it to a mere form, had no eye to CHRIST, no discernment of the LORD'S body in the sacramental service; went to it with an indifferency, to a common meal; and from the state of drunkenness and fulness by which many of those *Corinthians* were distinguished, at the LORD'S table, plainly testified, that they knew no reverence for the LORD us this holy service.

And I am the more inclined to conclude, that it was to such characters the Apostle referred, from what he declared to be the consequence of such unholy behavior. The Apostle saith, that *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself*. Not eternal damnation, for it is to the Church *Paul is* writing, and the Church is a body of truly regenerated persons who cannot come into condemnation, having passed from death unto life, Romans 8:1. But, *judgment*, that is, as he saith in a following verse, *many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep*. And they are expressly said *to be judged and chastened of the LORD, that they should not be condemned with the world*; that is, as the carnal, unawakened, unregenerate in the world. This distinction, with the causes of chastisement, most plainly and decidedly shew, that eternal damnation was never meant by the Apostle, neither, indeed, could be; for, as a Church, though fallen into a backsliding state of receiving the supper of the LORD unworthily; they were chastened to prove that they were still GOD'S children, and not liable to be condemned with the ungodly world. Those among them that slept, means no more, than that the sicknesses which followed, had in their nature produced death; but, neither doth this mean *eternal* death, no more than the other eternal damnation. Both the sickness and the sleep here spoken of by the Apostle, with which the Corinthians were visited, are expressly said to have been in *chastisement*, not destruction. And the very reason wherefore thus judged and chastened of the LORD, is said to have been, because they *should not be condemned with the world*.

But, while I am led to conclude that this is the real sense and meaning of the Apostle's Words, and as such, they are very gracious, and full of instruction to the LORD'S people on this interesting subject; I am willing to admit for argument sake, that supposing the words of the Apostle extend to a much greater degree of guilt, and even to eternal damnation, yet all this hath nothing to do with the Church of GOD in the present hour; neither, *in this sense*, can the Church of GOD receive, as the *Corinthians* did, the Supper of the LORD unworthily.

We have no Passover, no love feast, no eating and drinking in the Church of GOD, preparatory to the Lord's Supper. There is not the possibility of doing, as *Paul* charged the *Corinthians* with, that, *while one was hungry, another was drunken*. The bread and wine at the table, are no more than what is barely sufficient to answer the purposes of celebration. And these provided not by general contributions from the persons receiving, but from the Church. Hence, in the sense in which *Paul* condemned the *Corinthians* for their improper behavior at this ordinance, it is impossible for believers of the present hour to receive the Lord's Supper.

But is there not, it may be questioned, a possibility of eating of the bread, and drinking of the cup of the LORD unworthily? The answer need not be long paused over before it be given. Beyond a doubt there may. Every one is, more or less, an unworthy receiver, who hath not an eye to CHRIST in the sacred service. The ordinance of the Supper is a spiritual feast. And he who is not spiritual, cannot, in truth, partake of it. None who are in the original state of unregeneracy, can be

said to be worthy receivers. They may, indeed, with the body partake of the bread, and of the wine; but the soul of the unregenerate being still dead in trespasses and sins, can perform no act of spiritual life, and, consequently, cannot receive the Lord's Supper worthily. *They discern not the LORD'S body.*

Moreover, the Supper of the LORD is designed for the family of the LORD. It is, indeed, a family meal. CHRIST invites none but his family to partake of it. And every one of these are expected by constant invitation, and by birthright in the new birth, to take their seats at the table. JESUS will have none missing at supper time. All others are without invitation, and have no right there. And they are easily known. They have been regenerated, brought thereby into spiritual life, they cry Abba, FATHER. The SPIRIT witnesseth to their spirits, that they are children of GOD. They have a spiritual hungering and thirsting after CHRIST. They know JESUS to be the living bread which came down from heaven, and of him they desire to eat, and to live for ever. In short, every act of faith, and the exercise of grace in the new life, manifests what constitutes a worthy receiver. But to attend the ordinance of the Supper, without a spiritual appetite for the Supper; is as unsuited and unworthy as for the body, when diseased and unable to relish food, to set down to the ordinary table, or for the dead to be called upon to some act of animal life. To receive the Lord's Supper, to qualify for man's bread, to go there for the sake of form, or because arrived at a certain age, or because others do; all these, unquestionably, fall under the characters of receiving unworthily, though unattended with the sin of being guilty of the body and blood of the LORD.

And, it should be a matter of consolation to weak and timid souls, that after the Apostle had been saying such harsh things to call up the attention of the *Corinthians* to a jealousy over their own hearts on this interesting subject, he still calls them brethren, *Wherefore, my brethren*. By which is plainly proved, that though offending and meriting reproof, still they were regenerate believers. And, he tells them, that if *they would judge themselves, they should not be judged of the LORD*. All which manifests, that amidst all their weakness and infirmities, they were the LORD'S own people, and all he had said to them was for their comfort, and not their condemnation. Reader! It will be our mercy, if we derive from this beautiful relation of the Lord's Supper, the many sweet instructions, the LORD by his servant, hath here sent to the Church. And, oh! for grace often to be found in our place at the LORD'S table, and there to set forth the LORD'S death till he come.

Reflections

LORD give thy people grace to follow thy faithful servants as they have followed thee! Truly, thou dearest LORD! thou art the head of every man, for by creation all is thine. But, oh! how sweet to my soul, that, while JESUS is the head of dominion to the whole creation of GOD, he is the head of union to his body the Church, *the fulness that filleth all in all*.

Almighty JESUS! blessed for ever be thy name for thy grace in committing to the Apostle, for the benefit of thy Church, the precious form of institution of thine holy Supper. Oh! for grace to eye thee at every renewed opportunity of attending thy table, as receiving sinners, and eating with them! Oh! for

faith in lively actings upon thy Person, and blood-shedding, and righteousness, so as to hear thee saying to my poor soul, amidst the numbers of thine round thy table, *Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you, This Cup is the New Testament in my blood. This do ye as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me.* Oh! LORD! who shall thy people ever remember, if we are capable of forgetting thee! LORD! make the sweet service to all thy redeemed, a commemorating, communicating, refreshing, soul-strengthening ordinance, to feast thy saints here below, till we come to sit down with thee at the Marriage Supper of the LAMB in heaven.

Chapter 12

Contents

This very blessed Chapter, from beginning to end, is directed to one and the same Subject; namely, to describe the Oneness and Union of CHRIST and his Church. The Apostle from thence shews that all the spiritual Gifts and Graces which CHRIST'S Members enjoy, flow from their glorious Head, through the blessed Ministry of GOD the HOLY GHOST.

1 Corinthians 12:1-3

(1) Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. (2) Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. (3) Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the HOLY GHOST.

Under the similitude of the human body, the Apostle, in this chapter, sets forth the beautiful order there is in the Church,

as the body of CHRIST. For, as in the human frame every part, ministers to the very situation appointed, in promoting the welfare and harmony of the whole; so the members of CHRIST'S mystical body have each their distinct and separate stations, and under the influence of their great Head, mutually act together in accomplishing the sacred purposes of his will. With this, as the leading object he had in view, the Apostle opens the chapter on the subject of spiritual gifts, which he desires the brethren, (as he calls the Church brethren of CHRIST and of each other,) that they should not be ignorant of, but, have a suitable apprehension concerning. And, in order that the whole body of the Church might at one moment learn, that all and every spiritual gift must have been received from the LORD, and neither created, nor increased by themselves, he reminds them of the state of heathenism and idolatry from whence the LORD had called them. Reader! I pray you not to overlook this, as it relates to your own instance. Nothing can tend more effectually to hide pride from the eyes, than to be frequently led by the HOLY GHOST back to see our awful state of blindness, ignorance, and corruption, when in the days of our unregeneracy. Hence, the LORD bids the Church, while following after righteousness and seeking the LORD, *to look unto the rock whence they were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence they were digged*, Isaiah 51:1. See 1 Corinthians 4:6-7.

I consider the third verse in this chapter as a very striking passage, and eminently designed, after what the Apostle had said before, to enable not only those *Corinthians* to whom he wrote, but the Church of GOD in all ages, to ascertain the state of their faith in CHRIST by this standard. If the Reader

will look at the word with a suitable attention, he will discover, under divine teaching, that they afford a double testimony for the child of GOD to know himself by, in his apprehension of the Person and glory of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. *No man speaking by the SPIRIT of GOD calleth JESUS accursed.* It was a very common thing with the Jews, nationally considered, to speak of CHRIST as *the Tolah*, or *man hanged* on a tree; and, as their law declared, that he which was hanged was accursed of GOD; Deuteronomy 21:23, so they added to it; concerning CHRIST, *accursed of GOD*, They knew not, for their eyes were blinded that they could not,) how to enter into the apprehension of what the HOLY GHOST taught all his own people that CHRIST *hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us*, Galatians 3:13. But, as the blinded Jews, and the prejudiced Gentiles, while in a state of unconverted nature, both joined in this reproach of CHRIST; yet the Church being now enlightened by divine teaching, gives this testimony, *no man speaking by the SPIRIT of GOD calleth JESUS accursed.* They are blessedly taught by that Almighty Teacher, to behold CHRIST as being made both *sin and a curse for his people*, and by which he hath redeemed all his people from the whole, and by which *they are made the righteousness of GOD in him*, 2 Corinthians 5:21. Yet, though made both sin and a curse, he himself was both holy and blessed. The sins of his people were put *upon* him, not *in* him; as his righteousness is put *upon* us, not *in* us. Reader! do observe the distinction. As our sins could only be laid *on* CHRIST, and not enter CHRIST, though becoming a curse for his Church, as his Church's surety; yet all the while, he himself was *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens*, Hebrews 7:26.

And, in like manner, CHRIST's righteousness is *unto* all, and *upon* all *that believe*: Romans 3:22, not *in*, but *upon*, not arising out of themselves, but unto them *from* CHRIST. This is one precious testimony of the believer's speaking by the SPIRIT of GOD. And the other is like it.

No man can say that JESUS is the LORD, but by the HOLY GHOST. By which the Apostle did not mean, that the mere saying of it was impossible, but from divine influences. For, many a man from historical knowledge, may both say it and believe it. Devils believe and tremble, Luke 4:34; James 2:19. But, the Apostle's meaning is, that no man can know JESUS to be the visible JEHOVAH, but from the SPIRIT's work in the heart. The real heartfelt, and heart-enjoyment of CHRIST, is only attainable by the quickening and enlightening grace of GOD the HOLY GHOST in the soul. When a man hath received a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, he can then, and not before, truly say, that JESUS is the LORD; yea, his LORD, the LORD his righteousness, Ephesians 1:17; Jeremiah 23:6; 1 Corinthians 1:30. Reader! hath the LORD blessed your soul with this double testimony of JESUS, and to the truth as it is in JESUS? Be very cheery of such precious gifts. They are rare mercies in the present GOD-dishonoring, CHRIST-despising, Holy GHOST-disowning generation. The knowledge *of* CHRIST, the belief *in* CHRIST, the dependence *upon* CHRIST, and the walking a life *with* CHRIST, are sweet proofs of an interest in the Covenant, *which is ordered in all things and sure*, 2 Samuel 23:5. The LORD JESUS speaks *to all such* in those sweet words, Luke 10:23-24, and of all such to the FATHER in those sweet words, Matthew 11:25-26.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

- (4) Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. (5) And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. (6) And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

The Apostle here enters upon the great subject of spiritual gifts to the Church of GOD. And, he begins at the fountain-head, in calling them *gifts*. All which sets at nought the idea of all merit. For what is of gift, or of grace, cannot be of debt. And what makes the subject so truly blessed is that he refers the whole unto one and the same Almighty Being, the HOLY GHOST. However diversified, numerous, or extensive, GOD the SPIRIT is the Author and Giver of all. And what, if possible, is yet more endearing, He who anoints the whole of CHRIST'S members, is the same who anointed also the head. It is the same Almighty SPIRIT who works in all, and upon all, the whole family, who wrought in CHRIST, and upon CHRIST, when He was anointed *with the oil of gladness for, or above his fellows*, Psalm 45:7; Hebrews 1:9. In CHRIST, indeed, as a fountain. In his members, as in vessels. For the SPIRIT was not given *by measure unto Him*, John 3:34. *But to every one of us*, (saith the Apostle, speaking to the Church,) *is given grace according to the measure of the gift of CHRIST*, Ephesians 4:7. Reader! cherish the thought, for it is truly blessed!

1 Corinthians 12:7-11

- (7) But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. (8) For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; (9) To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; (10) To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of
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tongues: (11) But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

Very blessedly we are told, that those manifestations of the HOLY GHOST are given to every child of GOD, for their spiritual improvement in *the knowledge of GOD, and of the FATHER, and of CHRIST; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, Colossians 2:2-3. This should be well considered. Our union with CHRIST, which the SPIRIT shews; under his quickening influences, leads the regenerated soul to improve that knowledge into occasions of comfort and holy joy, through the whole of our walk of faith. CHRIST as our Head and Husband, is continually manifested to us by the SPIRIT, on purpose to shew, that whatever our wants are, or our exercises are, however circumstanced, or however tried, the HOLY GHOST manifests CHRIST to us for our profit. This manifestation preached CHRIST, shews CHRIST, proclaims CHRIST in all his suitableness and all-sufficiency. And this one office alone, of GOD the Holy GHOST, most loudly testifies his person and agency, and that in the Covenant, his ministry was, and is, to be carried on through the whole time-state of the Church, until grace is finished in glory.

If the Reader will count over the several gifts, here said to be the work and grace of the HOLY SPIRIT, he will find no less than *nine* distinctly enumerated. Neither are those the whole which are in the creation and gift of the LORD the HOLY GHOST. Numberless others are spoken of in the word of GOD. Be is *a spirit of judgment, and a spirit of burning*; Isaiah 4:4, *a spirit of grace and of supplication*, Zechariah 12:10, an *ambassador*, John 16:7. *advocate*, John 16:8-10, *teacher*, Romans 8:26-27, the, *glorifier* of the LORD JESUS, John 16:14.

In short, his graces and gifts in the (economy of the Covenant, are so many, and various; that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to particularize all. But these are marked down in this chapter; to shew how gracious the LORD is, and how much depends upon his efficient ministry in the church of CHRIST, for spiritual knowledge, improvement, and consolation. Not a single act of faith can a child of GOD exercise upon the Person or work of CHRIST, but by his immediate power. Not a promise can the child of GOD apprehend, much less plead, but from the LORD the SPIRIT'S opening it to his view, and prompting him to present it for acceptance, and for payment, before the throne. And, notwithstanding GOD the SPIRIT hath regenerated that soul, and brought all his newborn faculties forth to life and light in CHRIST; yet the actions of the renewed nature can only be kept alive, and in sweet enjoyment upon the Person, work, blood-shedding, and righteousness of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, by the quickening graces of GOD the HOLY GHOST, Hence, the Apostle prays for the Church to this amount. *The LORD (saith he) direct your hearts into the love of GOD, and into the patient waiting for CHRIST,* 2 Thessalonians 3:5.

Reader! I beseech you pause over this view of GOD the HOLY GHOST, and his divine ministry, which, the Apostle hath here given in these few words. *All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.* Hence, then it must undeniably follow, that all spiritual life and action come from Him. Creating work, renewing work, quickening at first the soul, which was before dead in trespasses and sins, and keeping alive the soul when quickened by his daily, hourly, minutely communications,

must be His, Ephesians 2:5; Psalm 22:29. Say then, Reader, can any facts upon earth be more plain and palpable, than that GOD the HOLY GHOST is a *Person* whose Almighty Agency creates all spiritual blessings, divides all spiritual blessings, and gives to every one severally as he will? Can any thing manifest the will and act of a Person more plainly and fully, than by what is here said? Oh! the blindness, folly, and daring presumption of the present CHRIST despising, HOLY GHOST-disowning generation!

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

(12) For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ. (13) For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. (14) For the body is not one member, but many. (15) If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? (16) And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? (17) If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *were* the smelling? (18) But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. (19) And if they were all one member, where *were* the body? (20) But now *are they* many members, yet but one body. (21) And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. (22) Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: (23) And those *members* of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness. (24) For our comely *parts* have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that *part* which lacked: (25) That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another. (26) And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.

The Apostle here enters upon that beautiful illustration, which he had all along in view, to shew the oneness of CHRIST and his Church, and which he explains by the similitude of the human body. For, as the human frame, made up of an infinite number of parts, is, after all, but one compleat whole; so is CHRIST'S mystical body. CHRIST'S Church is but one. Though some of his members are in heaven, and some on earth, and some yet unborn; yet the whole forms but one and the same compleat body. So JESUS himself declares, Song of Solomon 6:9. And it is a sweet thought. Wherever any of his members are, whether in Heaven or earth, born or unborn, they must be equally dear to JESUS; being equally the gift of his FATHER, equally betrothed before all worlds by the SON, Hosea 2:19-20, and equally redeemed during the time-state of the Church upon earth, and equally the objects of the regenerating grace of GOD the HOLY GHOST.

And this precious truth is read to us very blessedly, by what the Apostle hath here said, in relation to the equality of baptism, by which all are baptized by one SPIRIT into one body. Not water baptism, but by one SPIRIT. Numbers may be baptized in water, (and it is to be feared there are,) who were never baptized by the SPIRIT: witness *Simon Magus*, Acts 8:9-24. And numbers may be baptized by the HOLY GHOST, who never were baptized in water, witness the Thief on the Cross. *In CHRIST JESUS, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature*, Galatians 6:15. Oh! for that sweet promise of JESUS which he gave to his disciples, to be my daily mercy, of being baptized with the HOLY GHOST, Acts 1:5.

How very beautiful the Apostle hath set forth the different parts of the human frame, by way of representing the different members of CHRIST'S mystical body? It is really blessed to see, what an analogy there is, between the body corporal, and the body spiritual; and which by the way, becomes a proof, that both is produced by the same Almighty Architect and Builder.

First: the body is not, as the Apostle saith, one member, but many. It is made up of many and various parts, all beautiful in their various offices and characters, all equally useful in their several purposes and designs; and all ministering alike in their respective situations, and circumstances, to the general welfare of the whole. Now such is the mystical body of CHRIST. The body of CHRIST, his Church, is not one member, but many. There are some great, some small, some of larger abilities, some smaller, some weak, some strong; some more wise, others less so. But the humblest, as well as the greatest, is alike necessary, to form the body compleat: neither would the body be compleat, if the smallest, and apparently the most inconsiderable member was wanting.

And *secondly:* The highest cannot reproach the lowest, as if useless. The foot cannot say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body. Neither can either tell another that he hath no need of him. So, in like manner, the humblest of CHRIST'S members are as important in their apparently lesser offices, as the highest and the best. The LORD, the Maker, hath tempered all, to make all minister in the department to which the LORD hath appointed them, and all to act in the station the LORD hath marked, to their mutual happiness, and to his glory.

And *thirdly*: What endears the whole and makes the whole truly blessed is, that as the LORD is the Maker of all, hath by his infinite wisdom appointed all, and by his power governs all; so all are equally dear to Him whose all they are, and from whom all receive what they all are, and act only when graciously conducted, to promote the ends for which they are created and made; his glory, and their happiness. And this is the very purpose of CHRIST'S Church. *This people* (saith the LORD) *I have formed for myself, they shall shew forth any praise*, Isaiah 43:21. Reader! do not pass away from this beautiful illustration by the Apostle, which he makes, from the wise and gracious order the LORD hath formed, in compounding the human frame as a body; without gathering from it, what the HOLY GHOST by the Apostle evidently intended from the similitude, in explaining the yet far higher order in his ordination of the spiritual frame of the mystical members of CHRIST. All united to the One glorious Head, and every member deriving life, action, and influence, from Him, while sweetly ordered and governed by his unerring wisdom and love, they are supposed to be mutually ministering to His praise and their comfort. In the joy of one member, all partake. In the affliction of one, all sympathize. For as in the human frame, if the hand or arm be crushed, the whole body feels: so in the spiritual frame, the sufferings of any of CHRIST'S members calls forth the fellow-feeling of the whole Church. Reader! is it so with you? Do you take part in the exercises of CHRIST'S little ones? Do you rejoice in Zion's welfare, or mourn with them that mourn? Isaiah 62:1; Psalm 139 throughout.

1 Corinthians 12:27-31

(27) Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.
(28) And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. (29) *Are* all apostles? *are* all prophets? *are* all teachers? *are* all workers of miracles? (30) Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? (31) But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.

Here the Apostle forms his conclusion from all that he had been advancing, in reference to the Church of CHRIST. He considers the whole mystical body of our LORD, under the same beautiful order as he had before done, in contemplating the human frame, and shews, as plain as words can make the subject, that as CHRIST and his people are one, so the different members, placed according to his infinite wisdom, though diversified as it necessarily became them to be, in higher, and lower departments, though some were Apostles, Prophets, and Teachers, and others called on to the humbler offices of being ministered unto; yet were all equally useful in their station, equally important in the state where the LORD had placed them, and equally interested in the LORD'S affection and regard. Reader! there cannot be an higher proof upon earth, than is here given, of the equal attention the LORD JESUS bears to his mystical body, in all the several members of it. And it ought to be very sweet, both to the most exalted, and to the most humble of the LORD'S people. The greatest hath nothing to boast, in respect to his movement in the higher departments of the Church; neither the humblest to be cast down, when at any time feeling conscious of a low, or more exercised station. For as in a large and complicated machine, the smallest part in the working of it, hath its special office, and without whose

operations the whole could not be carried on: so in the mysterious government of the Church of GOD, the least of CHRIST'S little ones, are by him placed to the general welfare of the whole body, and afford occasion for the unceasing displays of his love; and calling forth the graces of His SPIRIT, both in them, and in all his members. And when the whole comes to be unfolded to view, it will be seen, that all have been mere receivers only; the highest nothing to boast and the lowest nothing to mourn for not having received more. CHRIST'S glory, as the Head of his body the Church, being the one grand and only design of the whole. The depth of the riches in the divine administration, though never to be fully explored, will in some measure be more opened to view. And the astonished Church of CHRIST, discovering her close connection with her LORD, and his everlasting union with her, and love towards her, will explain a thousand things, which now exercise faith and patience. And who shall calculate the joy and glory reflected by CHRIST on his Church, which will then fill the ravished soul, when at once beholding Him as the Head and fulness of all? *For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things; to whom, be glory for ever and ever. Amen,* Romans 11:33 to the end.

I must not close the Chapter, before that I have first called upon the Reader to remark with me, the meaning of the Apostle's expression, when he saith: *ye are the body of CHRIST.* Not the *natural* body of CHRIST, which he took into union with his GODHEAD. It is not CHRIST *personal* of whom *Paul* speaks, but CHRIST *mystical*. In that pure, and holy portion of our nature, which the SON of GOD assumed, and which, by the junction with the divine nature, formed one

Person, thence called CHRIST; we contemplate the glorious Mediator, and GOD-Man, as He is in himself: *in whom dwelt all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily*, Colossians 2:9. But when *Paul*, or any of the sacred Writers, speak of CHRIST'S body the Church, is meant, not CHRIST *personal*, but CHRIST *mystical*; that is, CHRIST in his members. It is that body, which GOD the FATHER, in his Covenant-office gave him; and which GOD the HOLY GHOST anointed, with Him, and in Him: and knit together with Him, in every individual member, which was given him; and in the time state of the Church, regenerates, and quickens, in Him. This is CHRIST'S mystical body: his temple, his body, the Church. And it is blessed, yea, very blessed, when we behold, how the Apostle's account here given is fully proved, when he saith: *Now ye are the body of CHRIST, and members in particular.*

Every child of GOD, given by the FATHER, Ephesians 1:4, betrothed by the SON, Hosea 2, and regenerated by the HOLY GHOST, 2 Peter 1:3-4, is to all intents and purposes, a part of CHRIST'S mystical body; for the whole of that child of GOD, being of the seed of CHRIST, is united to CHRIST, both body and spirit; and interested in all that belongs to CHRIST, as CHRIST, both before all worlds, during the whole time-state of the Church, and in and through the whole eternity, which is to follow. Hence those multitudes of promises, with which the word of GOD abounds, Genesis 12:3 with Galatians 3:16; Isaiah 46:3-5; Isaiah 59:21; Psalm 89:2-4; Psalm 89:29. And it is by virtue of this union, that *the spirits of just men made perfect, are before the throne of GOD and the LAMB*; when their bodies return to their original dust: Hebrews 12:23-24, and their bodies sleep in JESUS, being one with JESUS, and will

he quickened at the resurrection-morn, not by the naked power of GOD, but from the SPIRIT of CHRIST dwelling in them, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14; Thessalonians 4:16; Revelation 14:13; John 11:25; Romans 8:10-11. Reader! I beseech you ponder over the subject. It is indeed most sweet and precious. A union with CHRIST, brings up with it every thing that is blessed in CHRIST. For as it is a *spiritual* union, be *that is joined to the LORD being one SPIRIT*: 1 Corinthians 6:17, so is it opening a continual source of never ceasing joy and happiness. Living *upon* CHRIST, receiving all communications *from* CHRIST, and the whole springs of spiritual grace and refreshments being *in* CHRIST, the heart of the redeemed is made glad, whatever outward circumstances there may be; for JESUS hath said, *because I live, ye shall live also*, John 14:19. Behold then, bow many blessed and precious things are contained in the Apostle's words, when he saith: Now ye are the body of CHRIST, and members in particular.

I stay not to observe what *Paul* adds, concerning the diversity of offices in the Church. The Apostle's conclusion, calls us off from men, and the several gifts bestowed upon them for the Church, to look unto the LORD. *Covet earnestly the best gifts*, namely, what CHRIST hath promised, those durable riches, and righteousness, which he gives, Proverbs 8:17-21. And yet (saith *Paul*) *shew I unto you a more excellent way; namely, CHRIST himself, who is the way, yea, the only way, the truth, and the life*, John 14:6. Reader! what are all gifts, and graces, compared to CHRIST? Gifts, yea, CHRIST'S gifts are not CHRIST. When JESUS comes to visit a soul, he doth indeed bring his gifts with him; as some great Prince, when he travels, is attended by his servants. But who would lose sight of the

Prince, to look at his servants? Who would bestow their time at Court, in beholding the King's equipage, instead of beholding the King himself in his beauty? Isaiah 33:17. Precious JESUS! be thou the more excellent way to my soul. And while I learn to value, and highly prize all thy love-tokens, as love-tokens of my LORD; may I know how to prize thee above all, my LORD, my life, my way, my portion for ever!

Reflections

BLESSED GOD the SPIRIT! suffer my poor soul never to be ignorant of spiritual gifts! I know, indeed, O LORD, through thy divine quickenings, and gracious teachings, that like those *Corinthians*, I was once an ignorant, blind, and senseless Gentile; carried away unto the idols, and stumbling blocks of sin, and iniquity, which a fallen nature, under the dominion of *Satan*, had set up in my heart, Blessed be the LORD the SPIRIT, which brought me out of darkness, and hath enabled me to say, that JESUS is JEHOVAH, and my LORD! And I do desire to bless GOD the HOLY GHOST, for all his spiritual gifts to me, to every child of GOD, yea, to the whole Church, Blessed be the LORD, for the numberless, nameless gifts, with which he blesseth the people! All are his. From the first moment, in which the LORD quickens the poor sinner, through all the vast diversities of gifts he bestows upon every saint, whether Prophet, Apostle, or Teacher; until he brings home the whole Church, rich, for glory in CHRIST; well do I know, and with holy joy confess, that it is the same GOD, *which worketh all in all*. Yes! thou Almighty Minister of the Church! sure I am, that *all*

these worketh that One and the self-self SPIRIT, dividing to every man severally as lie will.

And blessed be thy Name, sweet and precious JESUS! thou, and thy Church are one. Many are the members of thy mystical body; yet, whether in Heaven or earth, still but one. Our LORD JESUS, our glorious Head, hath but one body. Our faithful Husband, but our Wife. Oh! then, do thou own, and bless, and sanctify, and keep, and love, and delight in thy Spouse, the Church! Make her, LORD! what thou wouldest have her to be. And at length bring her home, as one espoused by thyself, and presented by thyself, and to thyself, a glorious Church: the body of CHRIST, and members in particular, to be holy, and without blemish, before thee for ever.

Chapter 13

Contents

This is a short, but interesting Chapter on Love. The Apostle speaks in the highest Commendation of it, and declares that it will abide for ever.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

(1) Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. (2) And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. (3) And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

For the right apprehension of the Apostle's meaning, in this short, but beautiful Chapter, our first attention must be directed, under GOD the SPIRIT'S teaching, to form a full conception of the word *Charity*, as here used by the Apostle. Confining it, as in modern times for the most part it is, to the mere act of *alms giving*, which is but a branch of it, and that a small branch too instead of taking the thing itself, in the whole sum and substance of it, the greatest errors have followed. And yet, the Apostle appears to have taken every caution necessary, to prevent such an evil, in the opening of the Chapter. For he no sooner enters upon the subject, in speaking of the great excellency of charity, in describing its superiority to *the gift of prophecy*, to *all knowledge*, and even to *faith* itself; but, as if to guard his Readers against such a perversion, as the supposing the charity he is extolling a mere *alms giving*, he declares, that he might *bestow all his goods to feed the poor*, yea, *give his body to be burned*, out of compassion to his fellow-creatures; and yet be void of that principle of charity he is here speaking of. A plain proof, that the charity he had in view, and which to commend forms the whole subject of this Chapter, is of an higher nature, than mere alms-giving. It will be the first, and chief object, therefore, of our concern, at our very entrance on this Chapter, to discover, under GOD the SPIRIT'S teaching, what is here meant by Charity.

Now for the clear apprehension of the subject, let it be observed by the Reader, that the word, which the Translators of our Bible have here rendered *charity*, is in other places, rendered by them *love*; and strictly, and properly speaking, ought always to be so rendered: For *Agape*, which is the word

here translated *Charity*, cannot have its full sense and meaning explained, by any thing but love. *Love*, which is a branch from the love of GOD, as is there evidently intended to shew, (and as by and by will appear, when we prosecute the Chapter,) manifests in the Possessor, the electing love of GOD the FATHER, oneness and union with CHRIST; and that the regenerating power of GOD the HOLY GHOST, hath passed upon that man's soul, who hath this love, which *Paul* declares to be greater than all the gifts of prophecy, knowledge, or faith. And without all question it is. For *gifts* of the highest nature, are but gifts; and they are but *effects* flowing from some *cause*. But the grace of love, arising out of a union with CHRIST, proves a oneness with CHRIST; and is, as our LORD told the Woman of *Samaria*, that water which JESUS said should be in his people, a *well of water springing up into everlasting life*, John 4:14. And if the *Agape*, or love, *Paul* here refers to, be accepted, as it cannot but be accepted, upon the general, and most common principles of the Gospel; the sense of the passage is at once plain and evident: and all that follows in the Chapter, becomes beautiful, and interesting. Though I could speak, with all the ability, and head-knowledge of the highest order of created Beings, angels or men; (and what intellect of the greatest degree as creatures must the fallen angels possess? Luke 4:41), and though like *Balaam*, or like *Caiaphas*, I could foretell human events, Numbers 23:24 and John 11:49-52: and though I had a clear head-apprehension of all the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven; and even a speculative faith, to be convinced, that in the case of GOD's people, mountains I might remove did I possess what they possess: though in the conviction from head-knowledge, that the Gospel is true; and I aimed, like *Simon Magus*, to

purchase gifts by money, in giving all my goods to feed the poor, yea, endured martyrdom of the body, to purchase the salvation of my soul; yet all these, being wholly outward things, underived from the love of GOD, void of all grace-union with CHRIST, and not an atom of the whole springing from the quickening influences of GOD the SPIRIT; all would profit me nothing!

But now reverse the case. Suppose a truly regenerated child of GOD possessed of this love, (and which by regeneration he doth most truly possess,) this union with CHRIST, brings up after it, a participation in all CHRIST'S communicable gifts, and graces; then, all the sweet and precious consequences follow, which that union begets in the soul. *He that is joined unto the LORD is one Spirit*, 1 Corinthians 6:17. One, and the same spirit, actuates both. CHRIST, as the Head of his body the Church, communicates life, and all the blessed properties, which flow from that life in Him, to his people. Yea, CHRIST lives in his redeemed, maintains, and keeps up that life, by fresh communications momentarily from Himself. The love, ever flowing, and overflowing, in His heart, (for He is love itself, 1 John 4:16) flows into theirs. And thus the love which this Chapter treats of being a stream of *that River which makes glad the city of GOD*, Psalm 46:4, rising from such a fountain produceth all those blessed effects which the Apostle here describes; and being the source and cause of those effects, cannot but transcend the gift of prophecy, all knowledge, and the understanding of all mysteries, yea, faith itself, as the act of the mind, this being the *cause*, from whence all these; as *consequences*, spring.

Reader! let you and I pause, and for a moment to consider, the vast importance of possessing this life-giving principle, without which, all head-knowledge, and all alms-giving, are nothing worth. What awful mistakes, have thousands made, and are now daily making; on the subject of charity? What commutations have been offered to bribe GOD, with his own gifts? What Alms-houses, Hospitals, Churches, and a long catalogue of splendid charities have been set up to purchase Heaven? Yea, what martyrdoms voluntarily entered into, in the gift of the body, for the site of the soul? And all the while; the whole as foreign to the love of GOD the Apostle hath here so blessedly spoken of, as darkness to light! Reader! depend upon it, the love which comes not *from* GOD, never riseth *to* GOD. Nothing can ascend higher than its source. What begins in man; must end in man. What one of the Apostles was commissioned by the HOLY GHOST to teach the Church, concerning the LORD'S Wisdom, in opposition to man's wisdom; may with equal truth be applied of divine love, contrasted to man's love. *This wisdom which, descendeth not from above, is earthly, sensual, devilish. But the wisdom which is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of Mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy,* James 3:15; James 3:17.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

(4) Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, (5) Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; (6) Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; (7) Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

The Apostle having in the preceding verses spoken so highly of charity, in general terms; now begins to describe the special instances of this Christian grace, somewhat more particularly. If the Reader will number the several very sweet, and striking qualities, *Paul* hath noted down, of charity, he will discover, that there are no less than *sixteen* peculiarities, in commendation of it, which he hath enumerated. And, indeed, such a lovely principle, and flowing from such a source, may well be supposed, as diffusing itself in various streams, every where around.

I beg the Reader to observe also, how much the Apostle hath heightened the representation, by personifying charity under those several features of character. It seems all along, as if *Paul* is speaking of a person, and not simply of this grace given to a person. And is it a violence to this scripture, or will it be thought imaginary, if I were to say, might not *Paul* have his LORD in view all along, as he drew the portrait? Of whom but JESUS, can it be strictly said: *seeketh not her own, thinketh no evil, beareth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things!* Surely, none but JESUS, comes up to this character! Yes! thou Almighty burden-bearer; of thee, and thee alone, can it be truly said: *Thou hast borne our sins, and carried our sorrows.* Even now, thou art bearing the cares of all thy Church, and the persons of all thy people. And while, through all the present time-state of thy redeemed, thou art bearing all in the arms of thy love; shortly, when this time-state is over, thou wilt bear them every one home to thine eternal glory.

1 Corinthians 12:8-13

(8) For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; (9) To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; (10) To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: (11) But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. (12) For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ. (13) For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

I beg the Reader to pause over the opening of this paragraph, and to ponder well what is said, of the never-failing quality of CHRIST, in proof of what I remarked, at the entrance on this Chapter. Nothing can be more decisive in point, that the Apostle under the HOLY GHOST, is all along speaking of this charity, this love, not as simply the *effect* of grace in the soul, but a branch of that grace itself; that grace-union with CHRIST, which being *from* CHRIST, and *in* CHRIST, yea, maintained, and kept alive by communications which CHRIST imparts to his members, is in CHRIST as the cause. And hence the Apostle saith, *it never faileth*. Now this can be said of no other Christian grace, in the sense in which love is here spoken of. *Hope* will be done away, when the thing hoped for is enjoyed. *Faith* will be lost in sight, when the object, not seen, but believed in, is revealed in open vision. *Prophecies* shall fail, when all the grand events predicted are fulfilled; and there is nothing relating to the kingdom, to need their further ministry. *Tongues* will also cease, when language, now necessary to communicate thoughts, will be no longer wanted. And all the *knowledge* of the earth, suited to the

childhood of our present existence, will be superseded, in the ripeness of perfection, in Heaven. But, amidst all these failures, this charity, this love, being *from* CHRIST and in CHRIST, and as such, being immortal, incorruptible, and everlasting, cannot fail, but abideth for ever. Reader! Think how truly blessed the principle itself must be, and what a palpable testimony it brings with it to the child of GOD in the possession of it, of the everlasting love of GOD, in and through the Person, work, and glory, of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, by the effectual grace of GOD the HOLY GHOST

I beg the Reader not to overlook the very beautiful figure, which the Apostle hath been pleased to adopt, by way of illustration, of the present twilight of our existence, compared to what it will be, when the full display of knowledge shall be no longer seen through a medium. Children at the best; but in education, the objects are all too bright to be let in upon our tender organs of vision, in their own full lustre. The eye of the new born soul doth discern somewhat of the King in his beauty. In the LORD JESUS we behold beams of divine glory, sufficient to raise our most earnest desires, for a greater knowledge of Him, greater delight in Him, and greater longings for a conformity to Him. But all, and every thing, connected with the Person, fulness, grace, and glory of CHRIST, open to objects so bright and dazzling, that our highest attainments, are no more than as those, who see *through* a *glass darkly*. GOD'S CHRIST and GOD'S chosen the infinite greatness and wonders of CHRIST'S Person, GOD and Man in One, and the infinite dignity, efficacy, and fulness, of his blood and righteousness, his, love *for* us, and his grace manifested to us, what he is in himself, and what he is to his

body the Church; these glorious and momentous objects, are too overwhelming to the mind, to be looked at in full prospect of vision; that it is best suited to our present state of minority, we see but in part, until that which is perfect is come, when all our imperfect views will be done away. But it ought to affect our minds, with a joy unspeakable and full of glory, that, though now we behold CHRIST through mediums only, yet ere long, we shall see him face to face; and know, even as we are known. Very blessedly the Prophet speaks to this point, when comforting the Church: *In that day, the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his Ancients, gloriously.* Isaiah 24:23. So infinitely surpassing all splendor, will be CHRIST'S glory, and the reflection of it upon his people, that the glory of the sun in its meridian lustre, shall be but as the blushing of the morning; and the moon's light shall be but as paleness: CHRIST shining upon his Church, making small, and diminishing, all kneeled brightness.

I admire the blessed conclusion, with which the Apostle ends the Chapter, in drawing the different qualities of *faith*, *hope*, and *charity*, by the way of the more exalting the latter. *Faith* abideth with the believer, being a grace of the SPIRIT in the believer, and from his operation in the soul; it therefore abideth to the very last. Yea, regenerated souls, not only *live* believing, but *die* believing. The Covenant-love of GOD in CHRIST, with regenerated souls, are the same in life and death. *These all* (saith the HOLY GHOST by his servant the Apostle) *died in faith*, Hebrews 11:13. So *hope*, in like manner, rests in the full assurance, of all the unseen things engaged for, in the covenant. Hope realizeth them,

substantiateth them, and considers them sure. Hence it is called, *a blessed hope*, Titus 2:13, But, both *faith* and *hope* cease; When the soul enters Heaven; for their offices are for ever done away. *For what a man seeth, he can no longer hope for*, Romans 8:4. But charity, the love which is a branch of the love of GOD in CHRIST, flowing from his heart into ours, remains for ever; and therefore, in this sense, is greater than both. Precious JESUS! oh! for a portion of that love, that charity, which is the LORD'S gift, and not man's creating; and which, as it comes *from* GOD, so doth it lead *to* GOD, and will find room for exercise, for ever.

Reflections

Who can read this sweet Chapter, in the relation of Charity, and in the many lovely qualities, with which the Apostle hath so beautifully set it forth, without having the mind at once directed to JESUS, who is all that is here said, and abundantly more, even Charity in the full, compleat, and finished representation of it. Yes! thou dear LORD! every thing of love, lovely, and loving, shines in thee, in one rich constellation. What love, what charity, was that of thine, which prompted thine infinite mind, before all worlds, to set thine affections upon our nature; and at the call of GOD thy FATHER, to betroth thy Church to thyself for ever! And, what charity, what love, passing all knowledge, when after creation-work had taken place in the earth, and thy Church had treacherously departed from thee, to assume our nature, and die *the just for the unjust to bring us to* GOD! And, what an everlasting, unwearied, boundless affection, of love and charity; in cleansing, sanctifying, washing in thy blood, cloathing in thy

righteousness, making comely in thy comeliness, and bringing thy Church through all the time-state here below, until thou shalt bring her home to the eternal world above, to present her to thyself, a glorious Church, to her joy, and thy praise, for ever! Oh! for grace, to contemplate the GOD-Man, in whom alone, all love and charity centers; and from whom alone, all the manifestations of both, must be derived.

Blessed LORD! let it be my happiness to learn, from the contemplation of thyself, and from what is said in this sweet Chapter; that the most splendid talents, and most showy services, no pompous language or head-knowledge of all mysteries, neither the largest display of alms-giving, no, nor the martyrdom of the body, can recommend to GOD: nothing short of the love of GOD in the heart, can profit the soul. Oh for that washing of regeneration, and renewing of the HOLY GHOST, shed upon us abundantly, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD!

Chapter 14

Contents

The Apostle is discoursing in this Chapter, on Spiritual Gifts, and Prophecy. He points out the great Advantage of ministering in the congregation in a Language suited to the Hearers. And the Apostle adds, some Instruction, for the better Order of Worship.

1 Corinthians 14:1-15

(1) Follow after charity, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but rather that ye may prophesy. (2) For he that speaketh in an *unknown*

tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth *him*; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. (3) But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men *to* edification, and exhortation, and comfort. (4) He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. (5) I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater *is* he that prophesieth than he that speaketh, with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. (6) Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? (7) And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? (8) For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? (9) So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. (10) There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them *is* without signification. (11) Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh *shall be* a barbarian unto me. (12) Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church. (13) Wherefore let him that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue pray that he may interpret. (14) For if I pray in an *unknown* tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. (15) What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

The Reader should observe, that here and elsewhere in the Scriptures, prophesying is a term used for preaching. See Matthew 7:22. And, the prophesying, or preaching the Gospel, when commissioned, and sent by the HOLY GHOST, is, as the Apostle saith, rather to be desired, than any other gifts. If the Reader would wish to mark the vast difference, in those sent from GOD the HOLY GHOST, to those who run

unsent; let him compare Acts 13:2-5; Jeremiah 14:14 and Jeremiah 13:21 with Acts 16:6-7; Acts 16:9-10.

What *Paul* saith, of speaking in an unknown tongue, by which is meant, one that was not understood by the people, it is probable, he alluded to the use of the original Hebrew; which, though some of the more learned among men might be able to speak, was now, for the most part, a dead language. But, the most interesting part to be considered, in what the Apostle hath here said, in laying down regulations for the due observance thereof in divine worship, is what hath delivered, concerning the gifts of GOD the HOLY GHOST. All institutions in the Church of GOD, to make them profitable, must be excited at the first, directed, and influenced in every part, and both at beginning and end, be wholly under the sweet, and sanctifying operations of GOD the SPIRIT. We must pray with the SPIRIT, and sing with the SPIRIT, when either, or both, are done properly, or the whole is nothing worth in the sight of GOD. All the preparations of the heart, and the answers of the tongue, are from the LORD, Proverbs 16:1. It is the HOLY GHOST, which can alone excite a sense of want in the soul. It is the HOLY GHOST, which can make sensible, where those wants from CHRIST'S fulness can be alone supplied. It is the HOLY GHOST alone, which can open a communication, between CHRIST and the soul, and give a refreshing, both in the spirit, and understanding, to the LORD'S glory, and to his peoples' happiness. And very blessed it is, when the LORD'S people are brought under the gracious impressions of GOD the SPIRIT, and know, and feel, and enjoy these things, in seasons of holy worship. *Blessed is the people which know the joyful*

sound; they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance! Psalm 89:15.

1 Corinthians 14:16-22

(16) Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? (17) For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. (18) I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: (19) Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that *by my voice* I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an *unknown* tongue. (20) Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. (21) In the law it is written, With *men of other tongues and other lips* will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. (22) Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying *serveth* not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

I have noticed in my *Poor Man's Concordance*, somewhat in relation to the *Amen*, we so frequently meet with in Scripture. So that I do not think it necessary in this place, to enlarge on it to the full. Nevertheless, in addition to what was there offered, I would remark, that over and above the very sweet and blessed sense it bears, in allusion to the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and as one of his express names; it hath other objects of significance, which merit our attention.

No doubt, in every sense of the word, its highest and best meaning refers to CHRIST; yea, means CHRIST himself: the Amen, the Faithful and true witness. And at every use of it, all the Church a GOD should pause with profound reverence, in the recollection of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. I would consider it as JEHOVAH'S *verily*; his unalterable Word, purpose, will, pleasure, delight, in CHRIST.

But, from what the Apostle here saith, of the unlearned saying *Amen*, at our giving of thanks, it should seem, that the use of it in the Church, was intended to express somewhat of no small importance. An ignorance of what had been said, or a misapprehension, or the want of an hearty and cordial consent to it, with perhaps other things of a like nature, made it exceptionable; and it then, became improper. *Paul* seems to lay the stress upon the ill use of it, that in that case, the person using it is not edified. The *Amen*, was an ancient custom in the old Church. And, no doubt, the use of it was with an eye to CHRIST, 1 Chronicles 16:36; Nehemiah 8:6. We are told by some old writers, that the Jews had several ways of using the word; and according to that use, it had different significations. An hearty, long, and full *Amen*, was meant to intimate, every thing of blessedness. On the contrary, a cold, short, and hasty expression of the word carried with it an idea, that the person was not sincere in what he said. Reader! while you and I bless ourselves, in our glorious *Amen*, CHRIST JESUS, the GOD of truth, we shall have all the true blessedness of the word; and at all times be able, to set to our *Amen* that GOD is true, Isaiah 65:16.

I cannot pass wholly over without notice, what *Paul* saith, of the brethren *being not children in understanding*. It is a melancholy consideration, how many of GOD'S dear children continue weak, in point of understanding, and remain but as babes in CHRIST the greater part of their life. I cannot call that man, any other than a child, a mere babe in grace, who never gets beyond the doubts and fears, the ups and downs, of unbelief. A maturity, and ripeness in grace, is known, by an establishment, and firmness, in the faith and hope of GOD'S

children. The beloved Apostle speaks of young men that were strong, and to whom he had written on that account; and the word of GOD abode in them, and they had *overcome the wicked one*, 1 John 2:14. And herein lies the strength of such in the LORD. They are strong in the faith, that GOD is more honored, more glorified, by the obedience and death of CHRIST, as the sinner's Surety, and Representative; than GOD is dishonored, by the sinner's sins, and transgressions, and all his unworthiness. And hence, when established by grace, firm and unshaken in this most blessed principle: the man is no longer a child in understanding; but well taught, and well established of GOD. But, Reader! this is GOD'S work; not man's. So the LORD saith: and so the LORD'S people know. See 2 Corinthians 1:20-22.

1 Corinthians 14:23-40

(23) If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those that are* unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? (24) But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or *one* unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: (25) And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on *his* face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. (26) How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. (27) If any man speak in an *unknown* tongue, *let it be* by two, or at the most *by* three, and *that* by course; and let one interpret. (28) But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. (29) Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. (30) If *any thing* be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. (31) For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. (32) And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. (33) For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. (34) Let your women

keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law. (35) And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. (36) What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? (37) If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. (38) But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. (39) Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. (40) Let all things be done decently and in order.

I will only detain the Reader with a short observation, on what the Apostle hath here said, of a Gospel Church, and the conviction wrought by the SPIRIT of GOD, on the heart of a poor sinner, unexpectedly coming in, and beholding the LORD'S people so assembled, and feeling the blessed influence of the LORD'S grace upon his heart. What a lovely representation he hath made, of such a Church! And what an encouragement for the LORD'S people to assemble! And who shall say, to what extent, such events are going on continually *in* life? Who shall calculate, the numbers savingly converted, under a preached Gospel, by GOD the SPIRIT, through the ministry of his blessed Word? The Apostle's description, of the secrets of the poor sinner's heart, being made manifest, and the falling down on his face, in open confession, of the LORD'S word being armed with the LORD'S power; are beautiful representations of the case. And, Reader! when you and I consider, that to this conviction of soul by the HOLY GHOST, as the arrows of the LORD'S quiver, in his sacred Word are directed, that all the Persons of the GODHEAD concur in the vast design: GOD the FATHER draws to CHRIST: John 6:44. GOD the SON draws to himself: John 12:32, and GOD the SPIRIT makes the Soul *willing in the day of his power*, Psalm 110:3:

what a wonderful work must it be in itself; and how vastly important in the sight of GOD? Reader! hath an effect like what the Apostle here described ever taken place in your heart? Have you felt, in the assembly of GOD'S people; the word of the LORD, *quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword?* Hebrews 4:12; 2 Corinthians 10:5. It is very blessed, when the word of GOD is confirmed in the soul; and when, as the Apostle saith, in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word is established: when GOD the SPIRIT himself; and by his word, works in the heart and conscience to the accomplishment of such striking effects, as are here described.

Reflections

PASSING by many very useful observations, which in relation to Church government, might be taken from this Chapter; I shall only request the Reader, to make one general improvement from the whole, with respect to what the Apostle here calls prophesying, or preaching. The absurdity he shews to arise from the preaching in an unknown tongue, is hardly more glaring, than that of preaching in a stile and language, unsuited to the capacities of the hearers, which is little less unknown also.

Nothing can be more evident, than that the whole design of the Gospel is to proclaim to fallen, sinful man, tidings of Salvation. When the Angels posted down from heaven to tell a lost world of the coming of a SAVIOR; their preaching was short, but comprehensive, *Behold!* (said they) *we bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto*

you is born this day, in the city of David, a SAVIOR, which is CHRIST the LORD.

But let us suppose, that those angels had brought those tidings in a language, to a lost world, that no one understood; of what importance would have been their message? When a preacher speaks in a stile of studied elegance, high flown periods, and florid words, which the hearer cannot understand; of what avail is the whole sum and substance of his sermon? And in like manner, when the discourse is directed to expatiate upon the great excellency of virtue, and the happiness which will arise from a discharge of all the high duties of life; and when a poor sinner, with a sinful, sorrowful, broken heart, hears of this blessedness, but is conscious that he had done nothing to merit it, but his whole life meriting the reverse, in punishment; of what possible use can such preachers prove to a wounded soul like his? If indeed, preachers had to do with hearers not sinful, and polluted, who felt no concern for sin, because they had none to answer for; then, I confess, Moral Essays, as they are called, and harangues on the Loveliness of Virtue, might do very well to amuse, and gratify the pride of human nature. But, my Brother! my Brother! If every man be a sinner before GOD, and every man, as the Scriptures solemnly declares, standeth in need of salvation; oh! how needful must it be, to preach CHRIST plainly, fully, completely. Every preacher, sensible of the plague of his own heart, (and he who is not sensible of the plague of his own heart, is not fit, to be a preacher to others,) will rather, as *Paul* saith, speak five words with his understanding, and to be understood of others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. LORD JESUS! stop the

mouths of those who run unsend: who preach they know not what! But oh! send out Pastors after thine own heart, which shall feed thy people with knowledge, and understanding.

Chapter 15

Contents

This is a most blessed Chapter, on the Subject of the Resurrection of the LORD JESUS. From CHRIST'S Resurrection, the Apostle proves ours. And the blessed Effects of the Doctrine are shewn.

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

(1) Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; (2) By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. (3) For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; (4) And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures: (5) And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: (6) After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. (7) After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. (8) And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. (9) For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. (10) But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. (11) Therefore whether *it were* I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

The great and leading point, to which, by GOD the HOLY GHOST, the Apostle's mind was here directed, was to teach the

Church the glorious doctrine of the Resurrection. And never can the Church of GOD be sufficiently thankful to the LORD the SPIRIT, for his servant's ministry on this momentous truth, as here set forth in this blessed chapter. Reader! let us both look up, and bless GOD for it, as we enter upon the perusal of it; and beg for grace, so to read, and understand, as to have that blessedness of participation, promised to the members of CHRIST s body, on whom the second death had no power, Revelation 20:6.

The Apostle begins the subject, with calling the doctrine of the resurrection, in a comprehensive manner, *the Gospel*. And, in fact, so it is. For it forms the key-stone of the arch. On the troth of which, the whole building is knit together. And, it is worthy the Reader's observation, that after CHRIST'S return to glory, and the descent of GOD the HOLY GHOST upon the minds of the Apostles; their whole preaching was called, a *witness of CHRIST'S resurrection*, Acts 1:22. And the most galling part of the Apostles' ministry to the Jews was, that *they preached, through JESUS, the resurrection from the dead*, Acts 4:2; Acts 4:33. Paul's preaching at *Athens*, was considered as a setter forth of strange gods, because *he preached unto them JESUS and the resurrection*, Acts 17:18. Reader! you may learn from hence, the infinite importance of the doctrine itself. It is, as *Paul* here told the *Corinthians*, the very source of salvation, from death and the grave; By *which*, said he, *ye are saved*: that is, in the resurrection of CHRIST. Not by our memory of it, or even by our stedfastness in the faith of it; for the resurrection of the LORD JESUS CHRIST is a sure, certain, and unquestionable fact in itself, whether believed in or not. And blessed be GOD, the salvation of

CHRIST'S Church, is founded in CHRIST himself; not in the highest act of belief in his people. But the Apostle's meaning, when he saith: *By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you;* that is, your joy in it, and your comfort from it, shall be unbroken, and become to you an evidence, that ye are saved in CHRIST, with an everlasting salvation, by this holding fast, and retaining the cordial belief of it, in a practical use of it, upon your heart and conscience. To the same purport is what the Apostle adds, when he saith: *unless ye have believed in vain.* There can be no such thing as true believing in vain: For that faith which is of the SPIRIT of GOD, the faith of GOD'S elect; Titus 1:1, is a living principle in the soul, inwrought by the HOLY GHOST at regeneration: and being *from* Him, and kept alive *by* Him, who is the Author and Finisher of faith, liveth and abideth for ever. So that the LORD'S redeemed ones, whom CHRIST himself calls, *the children of the resurrection*, Luke 20:36, cannot but believe; neither can they believe in vain. The resurrection itself is in them a principle giving life. They have, by virtue of their union with CHRIST, part in the first resurrection; being by regeneration begotten to this lively hope, by the resurrection of JESUS from the dead, 1 Peter 1:3. Hence the principle is secured in CHRIST their Head, who hath said: *Because I live, ye shall live also*, John 14:19. Their comfort, their joy, their happiness, will indeed be more, or less lively, according to the greater, or less degree of their daily actings of faith, upon the Person and finished work of CHRIST. But, their security is not in their views of CHRIST, but in CHRIST himself. That faith, or belief, which is vain, and floats but in the memory, can be nothing more than what is historical. If there were any of this description, which had crept into the Church at *Corinth*; the

Church itself, from what the Apostle here said, might detect such characters, and mark the difference in themselves.

The Apostle, having paved the way for the great subject he had in view, now proceeds to remind the Church of the outlines of all his preaching, in relation to the Person, offices, character, royalty, perfections, and glory, of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. And *Paul* demands the attention of the Church yet more, because, what he had delivered unto them, he had received himself from the LORD. Reader! I pray you everlastingly to keep in recollection, this grand feature of *Paul's* ministry. From whom was *Paul* taught what he delivered to others? Nay, let himself answer the question. *I certify to you, brethren, (said Paul, in his Epistle to the Church of Galatia,) that the Gospel which was preached of me, is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of JESUS CHRIST.* See Galatians 1:10-16. And, as *Paul* was miraculously converted by the LORD, from Heaven: Acts 9:1-22, so was he specially ordained to the ministry, by the ordination of GOD the HOLY GHOST, Acts 13:1-4. Reader! you would do well, when at any time, Satan or the world tempt you, to pause, at any of the precious truths of GOD, delivered by *Paul*, to have these things in remembrance!

I do not think it necessary to swell these pages, in making observations on this sermon of the Apostle's, the heads of which he hath here given, of what he had before preached to the *Corinthian* Church. Of the *death Of* CHRIST, according to the prediction of the scriptures of the Prophets; the Evangelists have very fully related. The Reader would find it profitable, as he peruseth the wonderful history, to compare

the one with the other: Genesis 3:15; Psalm 22; Psalm 69; Isaiah 53; Daniel 9; Zechariah 12:10; Zechariah 13:7. And let him also consult the typical representations, under the law: Exodus 12; Leviticus 16; Numbers 21:9 with John 3:14. So again, of the *resurrection of CHRIST*, which *Paul* also noticeth, that it was *according to the Scriptures*, Psalm 16:10; Isaiah 26:19; Hosea 6:2.

We cannot sufficiently admire the air of holy triumph, with which the Apostle here speaks, of the many appearances of CHRIST to his disciples, after he arose from the dead. *Five hundred brethren at once*, and which, saith *Paul* at the time he wrote this Epistle, (which was not above *five and twenty years* from the period of CHRIST'S resurrection,) the greater part remain unto this present. As much as to say, whoever doubts the fact, may get full assurance of its truth from the persons themselves. *Paul's* personal knowledge of CHRIST'S resurrection arose from no less than *four* distinct manifestations, which the LORD JESUS made of himself to the Apostle. See Acts 9; Acts 18:9-10; Acts 22:17-21; Acts 23:11. I might have included also those other two instances recorded, Acts 27:23-25, and 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, for it would be difficult, if not impossible, to prove that CHRIST, who, in his mediator-office and character, is frequently called the Angel of the Covenant, (Malachi 3:1.) was not in the *one*, and did not manifest himself to his servant in the *other*, Luke 23:43.

I must not detain the Reader in a long notice of *Paul's* humbleness of soul, in the account he here gives of himself. The chief object of this chapter is to be contemplating what *Paul* saith of our LORD, and not the servant. But by the way,

let not the Reader overlook how much grace humbles, when the greatest of all the Apostles calls himself the *least* of all saints. Reader! what are we, what is every man in his highest attainments, if considered but for a moment, without CHRIST. And, oh! what a blessed thing must it be for you, for me, for all the chosen seed, when we can say as *Paul* here did, *by the grace of God I am what I am!* Yes! it is all of grace, GOD'S original choice, our regeneration, calling, redeeming, justifying, sanctifying, adopting, and ultimately being glorified; the whole Church trace all their mercies to grace, from one eternity to another, and every step in the way, during the present time-state in which the Church is conducting home to glory, hath this inscription marked as we go, *To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein lie hath made us accepted in the beloved,* Ephesians 1:6.

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? (13) But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: (14) And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain. (15) Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. (16) For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: (17) And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins. (18) Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. (19) If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

It appears very plain, from what the Apostle hath here said, that there were some among the *Corinthians* who denied the resurrection of the dead, for *Paul* saith, *how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead?* So that it was not the men of *Corinth*; among the heathens of that city,

neither of the Jews who might be living there, or the *Sadducees* of that place; but, evidently, some who professed a general belief in CHRIST, and mingled with the LORD'S people, which constituted what was called the Church at *Corinth*. Reader! pause over it, and remark, how very early heresies sprung up in the Church, to disturb its peace. We read of many in the Apostolic writings, 2 Timothy 1:15; 2 Timothy 2:17-18; 1 John 2:18-19; Jude 12; Jude 18.

What a beautiful chain of reasoning the Apostle makes use of, by way of preparing the minds of the *Corinthians* for the full and cordial reception of this glorious and foundation-article of our most holy faith. He adopts a well-known figure in rhetoric, of admitting what a man knows to be wrong, in order the more fully to prove from it, what a man knows to be right; and then by a climax riseth to the compleat conviction of the truth, from shewing the folly of the opposite principles. The *Corinthians* were all well assured, by the most incontestible matter of fact, that CHRIST himself had arisen from the dead. This doctrine was uniformly preached among them, and as cordially believed. But, notwithstanding this, though the resurrection of CHRIST necessarily involved in it, the fullest assurance of the certain resurrection of his members, as the greater includes the less, and as the Head, the body; yet there were some, who, though they believed in the one, doubted the other.

The Apostle begins, therefore, with, taking the objection of those unbelievers upon their own ground, *If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is CHRIST not risen*. The thing being admitted as impossible in one instance, implies an impossibility in the other. For CHRIST arose as a public head of

his body the Church. And, therefore, the resurrection of the dead must bring up with it the resurrection of all his members. His is the exemplar of all that is to follow. His resurrection became an earnest of theirs. The very object of his resurrection became a proof and pledge of it. For he died in a public capacity for his people. And he arose in the same public capacity for them. The great object of his incarnation, sufferings, obedience, death, and resurrection, formed but one and the same compleat act in reference to them. So that if one link in the chain be lost, the whole is lost. And, if CHRIST be not risen, all preaching is vain, and there can be no faith in CHRIST, but what is alike vain!

Neither is this all. For, worse consequences, if possible, arise. In the supposition, that CHRIST be not risen, those who were specially chosen to be the witnesses of his resurrection, become false witnesses: yea, false witnesses of GOD! For they assert what is not then true, that GOD raised him from the dead, and exalted him as a Prince and a SAVIOR at his right hand on the majesty on high. And, yet he did not raise him, neither was CHRIST justified in the SPIRIT; if so be he arose not as the Head of his body the Church, and GOD brought him not from the dead, as the Great Shepherd of his sheep, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant! Reader! before you proceed further, pray turn to those sweet Scriptures, Romans 1:4; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 13:20; Revelation 1:5; Revelation 1:17-18.

And to sum up the whole in this negative way of arguing, if, saith the Apostle, CHRIST be not raised, *your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins, and they which have fallen asleep in CHRIST, that is, died triumphantly in CHRIST, in full assurance*

of rising again in Him, and by Him, at the last day, are sunk to rise no more. And, in this case, all our high hopes of immortality and glory, in the presence of GOD and, the Lamb, are done away for ever.

Reader! pause over the solemn statement, as here drawn up by the Apostle, on the supposition of the possibility, that there was no resurrection of the dead. And, although you know from an infallible Teacher, and by infallible teaching, which can be liable to no error, that all the reasoning here used, and worked up to such an height, begins from false premises, and, consequently, could end but in false conclusions; yet learn from it, what GOD the HOLY GHOST plainly intended from it, for the greater joy and comfort of his whole Church and people; how truly blessed it is to have such a chain, as we have, of impregnable evidences to the *truth* of the resurrection of JESUS, and accompanied with all its blissful consequences to ourselves, that our *faith might not be founded in the wisdom of men, but in the power of GOD.*

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

(20) But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept. (21) For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead. (22) For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. (23) But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

The Apostle having refuted all that the mistaken views of men would have formed to themselves, on the presumption that there was no resurrection, now comes to his favorite topic, to show the blessedness which ariseth, it, the unanswerable conviction that there is. And, he proceeds to make it appear,

and more or less, from this place to the close of the chapter, he dwells with rapture in the contemplation, that, in the resurrection of the LORD JESUS, the Church not only behold him as risen, but in that glorious capacity, as the Head and forerunner of every individual of his people. For, saith *Paul*, he is become *the first fruits of them that slept*. As the first sheaf in the field, in the reaping season, soonest ripe, soonest gathered, and first brought in, is but the pledge and earnest of all that is to follow; so CHRIST the first in resurrection, *for it behoved him in all things to have the preeminence*, Colossians 1:18) is but as that pure corn of wheat which fell into the ground, which by dying, bringeth forth much fruit. See John 12:24 and Commentary.

I beg the Reader to admire with me the unanswerable and striking allusion, which *Paul* makes, by way of illustrating the doctrine of death and the resurrection, in the case of the two *Adams*. One involving the whole generation in death, by sin, the other including by regeneration all his in life. By man came death, by man came life. In *Adam* all die, in CHRIST shall all be made alive. And the reasoning is unanswerable. There is a vast propriety in it.; For if I, a poor sinner, am involved in sin, and all the consequences of sin, by reason of my being born from the seed and race of *Adam*; so by a parity of reason, it is but just, that I should be included in righteousness, even the righteousness of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, in being born of his seed, and being descended from Him. And so I am, if I can prove my relationship to the *one*, as I do to the *other*. And here lies the great point of decision. Now I, and every sinner, most fully prove, that we are of the Adam-race of sin, being evidently born of his corrupt stock,

sinning, as he sinned, and feeling the consequence of it, as he felt. The question is, can I prove that I am of the seed of CHRIST, in being new-born in CHRIST, and made the child of GOD by adoption and grace? This is the ground of the Apostle's reasoning, and most answerable it is in proof. For, as I never should have been involved, either in the sin or condemnation of *Adam*, had I not been proved to have been his by *generation*; so, by the like proof, unless I have testimony that I am CHRIST'S by *regeneration*, I cannot lay claim to all the blessed consequences which result wholly from this source,. Let the Apostle's words be weighed in this standard, and the judgment must be without error. *As in Adam all die, in CHRIST shall all be made alive.*

1 Corinthians 15:24-28

(24) Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. (25) For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. (26) The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death. (27) For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under *him*, *it is* manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. (28) And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

I detain the Reader at those verses, just to observe to him, that when it is said, the LORD JESUS will *deliver up the kingdom to GOD even the FATHER*, and that the SON also himself shall *be subject unto him. that put all things under him, that GOD may be all in all*; the meaning plainly is, according to all the analogy of scripture, that as all the purposes for which the kingdom of grace, during the present time-state of the Church, are answered, and for which, indeed, the very time-

state of the Church eras appointed; the kingdom of grace will cease; for at the end of it begins the open display of the kingdom of glory. But all this doth not refer to the Person of CHRIST, as if the LORD JESUS would cease to be mediator; or, as if all communications of glory then will not be as much in Him, and through Him, as are the communications of grace now CHRIST'S kingdom of grace ceaseth; but CHRIST never ceaseth to be CHRIST, that is, GOD-man in nature. Never to all eternity will he cease to be the Head of his body the Church, the fulness which filleth all in all, Ephesians 1:22-23. He is, and was, and will be, the everlasting mediator of communication to the Church, here in grace, and hereafter in glory. And all our approaches, drawings nigh, enjoyments, felicities, glory, manifestations *from*, and communions with JEHOVAH; in his threefold character of Person, will flow in upon the Church in all the individuals which constitute the one body of CHRIST the Church, from Him, and through Him, who is the Head of all things, to his body the Church, according to what the Prophet, commissioned by the HOLY GHOST, declared, *the LORD shall be unto thee am everlasting light, and thy GOD thy glory*, Isaiah 60:19; Revelation 22:5.

1 Corinthians 15:29-34

(29) Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?
(30) And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? (31) I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.
(32) If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die. (33) Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. (34) Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak *this* to your shame.

Perhaps there is not a passage in the whole Bible attended with greater difficulty to understand, than this before us, of the being baptized for the dead. Various have been the opinions, both of the learned, and the unlearned upon it. By the learned, I mean the taught of GOD, John 6:45. And by the unlearned, men who profess great knowledge of the wisdom of this world, but were never taught of GOD. And numbers there are of this latter class which have written upon the word of GOD. From such, however, nothing can be learnt in divine things, no more than from the blind who fancy, but have no conception of colors. But, among the learned, the taught of GOD, there doth not appear to have been any who have been taught by GOD the HOLY GHOST, concerning this baptism for the dead. And, therefore, what GOD hath not thought proper to explain, it should seem to be the wisdom of the Church rather to be silent upon, than by presuming on conjectures, to be in danger of attempting to be wise above what is written. I only venture, therefore, to observe upon it, that it serves to strengthen the views which the Gospel gives of the baptisms of the SPIRIT, so essentially necessary, as the LORD JESUS himself declared them, and so unimportant every other, where the HOLY GHOST doth not accompany their use. Luke 24:49 with Acts 1:4-5; Acts 1:8.

1 Corinthians 15:35-50

(35) But some *man* will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? (36) *Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: (37) And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other *grain*: (38) But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. (39) All flesh *is* not the same flesh: but *there is* one *kind of* flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, *and* another of birds. (40) *There are* also celestial bodies, and bodies

terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another. (41) *There is* one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for *one* star differeth from *another* star in glory. (42) So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: (43) It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: (44) It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. (45) And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was* made a quickening spirit. (46) Howbeit that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. (47) The first man *is* of the earth, earthy: the second man *is* the Lord from heaven. (48) As *is* the earthy, such *are* they also that are earthy: and as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly. (49) And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. (50) Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

Who they were which put the question, *how are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?* is not said; but we have reason to be thankful it was put, that the Apostle, under divine teaching, might answer it as he hath here completely done, and that GOD the HOLY GHOST hath caused both question and answer to be recorded. No form of words can be more plain, than *Paul* hath used, to bring the Church acquainted with the pleasing doctrine. And no images or similitudes more striking, in a way of illustration I do not think it necessary to add a word on this point, which the LORD himself hath explained. The striking figure of the corn, which by dying and rotting in the earth is made to live; and the diversity of flesh, to shew that there will be diversity of degrees in the resurrection; and the different glories of the heavenly bodies, which is another similitude as taken from them, in illustration of the same; these all beautifully explain

while they prove the doctrine. But, passing by these, which are so plain as to need no comment, I would beg to offer an observation or two on that part which the Apostle dwells upon, in reference to the resurrection, when considering CHRIST the *second Adam*, so called, as a quickening spirit. *The last Adam* (saith he) *was made a quickening spirit*. And the Apostle draws this most precious and blessed conclusion from it, that as in the *Adam-nature* of the *first* man, such are they that are earthy; so, in the received nature of the *second* Man, are they that are heavenly. All which corresponds to what CHRIST himself taught, that *as the FATHER raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them: even so the SON quickeneth whom he will*, John 5:21.

I beg the Reader's close attention, to this point. It is in my view most sweet and blessed. And every truly regenerated child of GOD, conscious of his union and oneness With CHRIST, will find it, under the HOLY GHOST'S teaching, most sweet and blessed indeed.

I shall not in this place stay to dwell on that grand point, (though it is the foundation of every other,) in respect to the blessedness of the resurrection itself, I mean that CHRIST'S resurrection is the sole cause of ours. This I will take for granted, the child of GOD hath been taught by the HOLY GHOST, and knows it as a practical and living principle in his renewed nature. Daily experience in his access to the throne, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of GOD, hath brought home the sweet truth to his soul, that CHRIST *was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification*, Romans 4:25; This he bottoms his joy, and hope, and comfort wholly upon. But what I have now particularly in view is from what the

Apostle hath here said of CHRIST, the second Adam, *as a quickening spirit, to observe how blessedly secured the resurrection of the LORD'S people, is from this divine principle. It is by virtue of the union and oneness with CHRIST, as members of his body, of his flesh; and of his bones, that CHRIST quickens his people, and raiseth up the bodies of his saints at the last day.*

Now, in proof of this most precious and soul-refreshing doctrine, there are one or two interesting points to be attended to, which set this subject in the clearest light, and which not only explain the principles of the resurrection, as all coming from CHRIST himself, but render the expectation of it *a joy unspeakable, and full of glory.* I beg the Reader to examine them one by one.

And *first.* Taught as we are to consider CHRIST and his people one, and to behold, him as a quickening spirit, it immediately follows, that from that quickening, as the Head of his body the Church, every individual member of his body shall be raised, and brought into life at the last day. This was what JESUS himself preached at the grave of *Lazarus*, when he said, *I am the resurrection and the life,* John 11:25. And the same his servant *Paul* was commissioned to tell the Church, when he said, *your life is hid with CHRIST in GOD, when CHRIST who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory,* Colossians 3:3-4. So that CHRIST himself is the life of his people, precisely, as the head of an human body is the life of that body, and the efficient principle of communicating new life to the dust of his saints, is *in* him, and *front* him. This the LORD himself preached by *Ezekiel* also, when he said, *O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up*

out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you. Then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken, and performed it, saith the LORD, Ezekiel 37:12-14. So, again, by the Prophet *Isaiah*, the same blessed truth is proclaimed, and certified to be accomplished in the same way. Yea, GOD the FATHER gives his *Personal* word in the confirmation of it also. *Thy dead men*, said GOD the FATHER to his dear SON, as CHRIST mediator, *thy dead men shall live*. To which CHRIST is represented as answering, *together with my dead body shall they arise*. Then comes CHRIST'S call to his dead: *Awake and sing ye that dwelt in dust*. Compare this with what the HOLY GHOST hath said by *Paul* concerning them which *sleep* in JESUS, when the LORD himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the *dead in CHRIST* shall rise *first*, 1 Thessalonians 4:13 to the end. Then GOD the FATHER takes up the conversation again, and by a beautiful figure, explains how the glorious act shall be accomplished: *thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her dead*, Isaiah 26:19. As in the wintry season of the year, there is nothing in the whole vegetable creation, so unpromising as the dry sticks of herbs, and yet from their root there comes forth in the spring moisture to give them new life and verdure; so CHRIST, the root of his people, in the morning of the resurrection, reanimates the dust of his mystical body, and his dew is the sole cause of their renewed life. To this effect also is that sweet promise. Psalm 110:3.

From hence it very fully appears, that in CHRIST'S resurrection, the resurrection of his people is not only secured, but by it

effected. CHRIST himself is the sole efficient cause. It is accomplished by their union with him, according to what he said, *because I live ye shall live also*, John 14:19. And what I be the Reader most particularly to consider, indeed it is the grand point I am laboring under GOD the SPIRIT, teaching to impress upon his mind, that the resurrection of the just. (justified believers in CHRIST,) differs wholly from the ungodly, the unregenerate, and uncalled. *The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and come forth*, John 5:28. But this is said to be effected on the graceless dead by the naked power of GOD, in hearing his voice. Not so, the members of CHRIST'S mystical body. They arise from their union with Him, as a quickening spirit. And the HOLY GHOST gives his further confirmation to it, by his servant *Paul*, when speaking to the Church, *If CHRIST be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness*; that is, the body not being renewed, because it was never intended while in the present time-state, when the spirit at regeneration is made holy in CHRIST, returns, at the time appointed, as a body of sin and death, to the dust of the earth, and there remains until the morning of the resurrection. But *the spirit being life because of righteousness*, that is, being one with CHRIST, and interested in CHRIST'S righteousness; the body sleeps in JESUS, and is His by redemption also. And, therefore, the HOLY GHOST adds by the Apostle: *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 which dwelleth in you*, Romans 8:10-11. The indwelling SPIRIT of CHRIST becomes the sole efficient cause of raising the body from the grave of death at the resurrection, as the

SPIRIT of CHRIST became the sole efficient cause of raising the soul from the grave of sin at regeneration. I hope that I have explained myself to the Reader's apprehension, on this most soul comforting subject, and from those precious scriptures of GOD, very fully shewn, the sweetness of that glorious office-character of CHRIST, as it concerns his people, that as *Paul* hath here said, the last *Adam* is a *quicken*ing SPIRIT. *Secondly*. It is another grand point in the doctrine of the resurrection to have in view, and, under divine teaching, always to keep in remembrance, and live in the enjoyment of, that the bodies of believers will arise the same *identical bodies* as they go down to the grave. As CHRIST arose the very same body as was put into the sepulchre, so shall his people. As was the Head, so must be the members. *Job* was taught this precious truth, and rejoiced in it, ages before redemption-work was accomplished: *Job* 19:25-27.

And *Paul* most decidedly confirms the same, when saying, *this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*. Indeed, on the supposition that this was not the case, the doctrine of the resurrection would be lost. If the LORD gave to his people a *new* body, this would not be *resurrection*, but a *creation*. And in this sense, what is become of the mystical body of CHRIST? Wonderfully changed it will be indeed, and prepared for the everlasting enjoyment of GOD in glory. So *Paul* describes. And blessed be GOD, so we shall find it. It will be no longer the subject of sin, and sorrow, and temptation, and evil. It was sown a *natural* body, it will be raised a *spiritual* body. And, as spirits are not liable to bodily infirmities, all the cares and disquietudes to which our flesh is heir, in this mortal state, will be known and felt no

more. But, *identity* will be preserved. The very person that I now am, and that you now are, will be then the same. The *hand* that is writing those humble lines of the *Poor Man's Commentary*, and the *eye* that reads them, or the *ear* that hears them, will be the same. Changed from weakness to power, and from dishonor to glory, we shall be but, *personally*, the very beings we now are. JESUS will *change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things, unto himself.* Philippians 3:21.

I must detain the Reader no longer. But may the LORD the HOLY GHOST lead every truly called, and regenerated believer into an heart-felt enjoyment of these soul-refreshing things. In the blessed expectation of it, we may all cry out with *Job; O hide me in the grave, and keep me secret till the set time, and remember me! All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.* Job 14:13-14.

1 Corinthians 15:51-58

(51) Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, (52) In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. (54) So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. (55) O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? (56) The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. (57) But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (58) Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

What the Apostle calls a mystery, must be understood, that it is in itself never to have been known without an immediate revelation, being not discoverable by the light of nature, or human intellect, And, indeed, what *Paul* hath here said, is such a mystery, as no other part even of scripture hath revealed. That some may be living upon earth at the great day of account, might have been supposed. This the Apostle elsewhere asserts, 1 Thessalonians 4:17. But the miraculous and instantaneous change from mortality to immortality, which he here asserts, and which is to be wrought without passing through death, this is a mystery no where else spoken of. Reader! You and I find unceasing cause to bless GOD for *Paul's* ministry. Where, and when, the LORD taught him this, whether when caught up to the third heaven, or in any of the other visions he was favored with, is not so material for us to know, as to have received his testimony, as the LORD commissioned him to deliver.

The song of triumph with which *Paul* closes this most blessed chapter, is what all true believers in CHRIST, with equal joy, are called upon to join in. And while we sing them, because all our triumphs are in CHRIST, let no one forget that they are the LORD'S own words, proclaimed in a way of Covenant promise, and which *Paul*, taught of the LORD, hath converted into an hymn of praise, as GOD'S promises in CHRIST, which are all yea and Amen, should be. See Hosea 13:14. Oh! for grace to join the holy song. CHRIST hath destroyed death by his death. He hath taken out the sting of death, which is sin, by taking it away, and healing the wounds of sin by his blood. Acquitted now, there can be no condemnation *then*. When a redeemed believer dies, he dies in CHRIST, and to CHRIST, and

is one with CHRIST. JESUS speaks: *Fear not I have the keys of hell and of death.* Amen. Revelation 1:18.

Reflections

On! thou that art the resurrection and the life! Hail! thou glorious Almighty LORD JESUS! Thou hast indeed declared thyself to be the SON of GOD, with power, according to the SPIRIT of holiness, by thy resurrection from the dead. And thou hast thereby shewn to the fullest demonstration, that in thy life thy people live, and by thy resurrection theirs also is secured, thyself becoming the first fruits of them that slept. Praises to thy great and glorious name! Sin is now pardoned. Justice is now satisfied. Law is now fulfilled. Satan conquered. Hell subdued, and heaven open to all believers!

Oh! ye faithful in CHRIST! rejoice in hope of the glory of GOD. Death hath no longer a sting; the passage through the grave is but the valley of the *shadow* of death, for the *substance* is done away. CHRIST hath perfumed the grave with his holy body. It is no longer the territories of the devil, but the chamber of rest to the LORD'S people. From thence, clear views are now seen of the city of the living GOD. Blessed be the GOD and FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us unto this lively hope by the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST from the dead! Blessed be GOD the SON, who is the resurrection and life of his people. And blessed be GOD the HOLY GHOST, who *by* the washing of regeneration, which he hath shed on us abundantly, through JESUS CHRIST our SAVIOR, hath made us partakers of the divine nature, that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life! Amen and Amen.

Chapter 16

Contents

The Apostle closeth his Epistle with this Chapter. Several very earnest Admonitions are given, which are followed up with Salutations to the Church.

1 Corinthians 16:1-4

(1) Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. (2) Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. (3) And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by *your* letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. (4) And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.

It will not be necessary to offer much observation on what the Apostle recommends in collecting for the poor. Every Church, like *Corinth*, hath the poor among them, for the LORD hath said, *they shall never cease out of the land*. And the LORD commands the hand to be opened wide to *his* poor. And when the LORD gives a wide hand, and a wide heart together, there will need nothing more to enforce collections. Deuteronomy 15:11; Zephaniah 3:12. There is some what very sweet and seasonable in the exercise of tenderness and compassion to the LORD'S poor, as the LORD'S *poor* every day, but eminently more so on the LORD'S day. On that day we give a truce to all worldly cares, and are concerned, or supposed to be concerned only for *the one thing needful*. Sweet day! which commemorates all in one, the LORD'S rest from the works of creation, the resurrection of JESUS, and the first descent of the HOLY GHOST, in the open display of his Person at the feast of

Pentecost. What day so suited for the heart to be flowing with love to our poorer brethren, as when we celebrate JEHOVAH'S love to us, in his threefold character of Person, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, as manifested in creation, redemption, grace, and glory?

1 Corinthians 16:5-12

(5) Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia. (6) And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go. (7) For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit. (8) But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. (9) For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and *there are* many adversaries. (10) Now if Timothy come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also *do*. (11) Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren. (12) As touching *our* brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.

When we read this account of the Apostle, respecting his ministry *to Ephesus*, and which is recorded (Acts 19), it should seem that *Paul* had strong views of the LORD blessing his ministry there. It was, indeed, a great door, and an effectual one, which was opened unto him; and, as he foresaw, so he found, many adversaries. *Demetrius* and the craftsmen greatly opposed him. Perhaps *Paul* alluded to those transactions, when he compared his conflicts to that of fighting with beasts at *Ephesus*, I Corinthians 15:32. See Acts 19:20. Reader! You and I, yea, the Church of GOD in all ages, have reason to bless the LORD for *Paul's* acquaintance with the *Ephesians*. That blessed Epistle, which, under the

inspiration of the HOLY GHOST, he sent to the Church at *Ephesus*, and which is handed down to us, arose out of *Paul's* ministry there.

Of *Timothy* and *Apollos*, we need not enlarge in observations concerning them. *Paul's* Epistles to the former of them will engage our notice, when we come to our *Poor Man's Commentary* on those Scriptures. And the *latter* hath been already brought before us, in all that is said of him, Acts 18 and 1 Corinthians 1:12, and 1 Corinthians 3:4-6.

1 Corinthians 16:13-18

(13) Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. (14) Let all your things be done with charity. (15) I beseech you, brethren, ye (know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and *that* they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) (16) That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with *us*, and laboreth. (17) I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. (18) For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.

There is somewhat truly interesting in this short, but striking exhortation of the Apostle. *Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.* *Paul* doth not simply look to them, or teach them to look to themselves; as if either, or the whole of these Christian graces were of their own procuring, or depended upon their own strength to make effectual. The exhortation is more like the Prophet on the watch-tower, directing them to be on the look-out for the daily, hourly, minutely manifestations of the LORD'S grace, to be made perfect in human weakness; that, in a consciousness of their

nothingness, they might be made *strong in the LORD, and in the power of his might*, Ephesians 6:10.

I never can say enough to myself, neither to the Reader of this humble work, on the subject of this watchfulness, and the standing fast in the faith, and the like. Steadfastness in faith is not so well understood as its importance demands. We are everlastingly looking for it in ourselves, and in our own attainments; whereas the Scriptures are uniformly teaching us it can be only found in the LORD. That precious child of GOD, be who he may, can only be said to be stedfast in faith, when counting the state of grace in which he stands, he forms his conclusions, not from what he feels in himself, but from what CHRIST is. Not from what hath passed *in* him, but from what hath passed *for* him, in the council of peace before all worlds, and from CHRIST'S suretyship engagements and fulfillments for his Church and people in time. A child of GOD may sometimes be enlarged, and sometimes straitened, sometimes in the mount, and sometimes in the valley. But neither of these states becomes the standard to judge by of his interest in CHRIST. I will be free to confess, that it is comfortable, as it is our privilege, to be always rejoicing in hope of the glory of GOD, yet, the hope and the glory of GOD do not depend upon our rejoicing sense of them. *Paul* meant somewhat more than the mere accommodation of the body, when he said, *I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound*, Philippians 4:12. It is blessed to be strong and stedfast in the faith, when things are dark and discouraging, and to trust CHRIST and his promises, when the way to the accomplishment of those promises we cannot see through.

1 Corinthians 16:19-24

(19) The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. (20) All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with a holy kiss. (21) The salutation of *me* Paul with mine own hand. (22) If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha. (23) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. (24) My love *be* with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

It would have been unnecessary to have dwelt upon the salutations with which the Apostle closeth his Epistle; every one knoweth how very decided a part they form in Christian fellowship and communion. But we have in this paragraph, with which the Apostle takes leave of the Church in this first Epistle, an expression which we meet with in no other part of the word of GOD, but which *Paul* delivers in a kind of denunciation which demands our attention. *If any man love not the LORD JESUS CHRIST, let him be anathema maran-atha.* In order for the right apprehension of the words, it should be considered what they mean, and to whom they are applicable.

As to their meaning, it should seem to have been a form made use of by the Jews, when they intended to express somewhat more than ordinarily severe, to say, let him be *anathema maran-atha*, that is, let the LORD determine his punishment, for we cannot, his crime is so great and heavy. The Jews had a word for excommunication, namely, *Cherem*, which implied a total separation for ever from all hopes of recovery, and such as was never used, but to imply the being devoted to eternal wrath. This word corresponded to the expression here used by *Paul* of *anathematizing*. And in application to the persons the Apostle had in view, the sense is, that, if any lived and died without being regenerated, and,

consequently, not loving CHRIST, because a state of nature in the carnal mind is enmity against GOD, he was of necessity in this state, and, as such, is justly exposed to everlasting wrath. And, if *Paul* used the expression as the Jews used it, then it would follow, that by it, the Apostle left the nature and degree of punishment to the LORD. *If any man love not the LORD JESUS CHRIST, let him be anathema maran-atha!*

But, in reference to modern times, it may not be amiss to ask to whom the words are applicable? There maybe, indeed there must be, multitudes among the unawakened and profane, of whom it may be truly said, they do not at present love the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and yet such a sentence cannot be passed upon them. What numbers are there of the LORD'S own people which are now in nature's darkness, who, therefore, love not the LORD; but yet from belonging to the LORD, when the fulness of the time is come, and GOD sends forth the SPIRIT of his SON into their heart, they will cry Abba! FATHER!

Now, the *anathema, maran-atha* can never belong to them. Neither, if during the time of their unregeneracy, they should grievously afflict, and persecute the Church of GOD, as *Paul* himself did, while in a state of unconversion; yet, as in these instances, the LORD is shewing forth all long-suffering, and all the while, though persecuting CHRIST in his members, they themselves are the unconscious members also of CHRIST'S body; here can be no *anathema* pronounced against them!

Reader! there is a case, however, of great clearness, in which the faithful cannot err, and you and I may, (and we ought indeed,) try our faith and love to the LORD JESUS by the

standard. Supposing we see and know any one person or persons living and dying in an hatred to CHRIST, and supposing this person is near and dear to us in the ties of nature, while full of malignity, in respect to the doctrines of grace; can we join the Apostle? Can we say of such as *Paul* did: *If any man love not the LORD JESUS CHRIST, let him be an anathema maran-atha* here is the trial of faith and love!

Sweetly the Apostle concludes his Epistle, as we have cause to conclude every day and night, every deed and prayer, ordinance and service; *the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and our LORD CHRIST JESUS be with all his people.* Amen.

Reflections

READER! let us not take leave of this beautiful, and blessed Epistle of the Apostle, without first praising the LORD the HOLY GHOST for so precious a portion of inspired truths, and thanking Him for the services and ministry of it by so faithful a servant.

And, while we both look up to the Great Author of his Holy Word, for his divine teachings to accompany our perusal of the whole contents of it, as often as we are favored with the opportunity, let us, as we pass on from chapter to chapter, be everlastingly on the look-out for Him whom *Paul* preached, and whom *Paul* determined to know nothing beside; even JESUS CHRIST, *and him crucified*; JESUS CHRIST, and him glorified; the sent of GOD, the Lamb of GOD, the word of GOD, the power of GOD, and the wisdom of GOD, for salvation to every one that believeth; yea, JEHOVAH'S One, and only One

plan of mercy, in the joint love of the HOLY THREE IN ONE; FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, to all eternity.

Farewell *Paul!* for the present! We bless thy LORD, and our LORD, for having counted thee faithful, putting thee into the ministry. May the LORD render thy services yet blessed, as the LORD hath in the ages past, and in the present hour, so on to thousands yet unborn. Oh! may the LORD commission those sweet and sacred Epistles to the edification and establishment of the Church upon earth, as long as time shall remain, until the whole redeemed of the Lon are brought home to join the Church in heaven.

Amen.

THE SECOND EPISTLE
OF THE APOSTLE PAUL TO THE
CORINTHIANS
2 Corinthians

General Observations

It should seem, from several expressions scattered over the different pages of this *Second* Epistle to the Church at *Corinth*, and particularly from what *Paul* saith, about *Titus* coming from them to him; that the Apostle's former Epistle had been very kindly received by the Church in general. And, it is more than probable, that *Paul* felt his mind, in consequence of it, the more encouraged to address the Church, as he here hath done in several of the chapters in words of the sweetest consolation.

As to the *time* when written, it hath been very generally supposed, that it was not later than a year after the former. The close of the Epistle dates it from *Philippi*. And *Titus* and *Lucas*, were the highly favored Post-men, to convey it to the Church.

The sum and substance of it, I do not think it necessary to describe, by a long detail of contents. Every Chapter carries with it the blessed particulars in its bosom, I would only observe, that the ministry of it, was not intended to be limited to the Church of *Corinth*, but to have regard to the whole body of CHRIST, in all ages. As *Peter* said of the Prophets, so we may say of the Apostles: *not unto themselves, but unto us did they minister the things which are now reported unto us by them, in the Gospel preached with the HOLY GHOST sent down from Heaven.*

I only detain the Reader, on his entrance on this blessed book of GOD, to desire him, to join my spirit, in prayer to Him, *from whom alone cometh every good, and every perfect gift, that it may be commissioned to our mutual benefit, and the divine praise, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.*

Chapter 1

Contents

The Apostle opens this Second Epistle, with his usual Apostolic Benediction. He blesseth GOD for the sweet Consolations the whole Church are possessed of, in and through CHRIST. He speaks of the Exercise of his Ministry among them, as in godly Sincerity; and reminds them, that GOD'S Promises are all Yea, and Amen, in CHRIST JESUS.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-4

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: (2) Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. (3) Blessed

be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; (4) Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

I do not detain the Reader, with any particular observation on *Paul's* salutation of the Church. It is much the same as in the former Epistle. He stiles himself an Apostle, by the will and call of GOD. And this was highly proper, in proof, that he did not run unsent, Acts 13:1-4; Hebrews 5:-6. And as with great humility he joined *Sosthenes* with him, though not an Apostle, in his address to *Corinth* in his former letter; so here, with the same affection, he joins *Timothy*. *Paul* takes in a larger circuit in this Epistle than in the former; for he includes *Achaia*, which contained a considerable part of *Greece*. Probably, by this time, the Church of CHRIST had been extended beyond the city of *Corinth*. But let it be well noticed, that it is the Church of CHRIST to whom *Paul* wrote. Grace and peace, from GOD in CHRIST, could be conferred on none but the Church, Luke 10:5-6.

But I beg to detain the Reader; with an observation or two, on the form of expression with which the Apostle enters on his Epistle, when he saith: *blessed be GOD, even the FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the FATHER of mercies and the GOD of all comfort*. In the parallel passage, Ephesians 1:3, the same word which is here rendered *even*, is there made *and*. And every one knows, who hath the smallest acquaintance with the original language, that both among sacred and profane writers, those Greek Particles are differently used, and not unfrequently.

In the language of the New Testament, we meet with the name and title of GOD the FATHER, upon various occasions, to express the glories of his Person, according to the particular subject then in view. GOD the FATHER, in the essential glories of the GODHEAD, is distinguished by this divine title, to distinguish him from the Person of GOD the SON, and GOD the HOLY GHOST, See 1 John 5:7. GOD the SON, is not the SON of GOD by creation, as angels are for in his divine nature, in point of eternity, as well as in all divine perfections, he is One with the FATHER, over all GOD blessed for ever. Amen. But, in his human nature, GOD the FATHER is the GOD and FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. For so CHRIST by the SPIRIT of prophecy declares, Psalm 40:6-8 with Hebrews 10:5. But this may be understood also, not to the exclusion of GOD the SON, *taking* this human nature, by his own Almighty power, into union with the GODHEAD: Hebrews 2:14; Hebrews 2:16, neither to the exclusion of GOD the HOLY GHOST, in his personal agency of the mysterious work, who is expressly said to have overshadowed the womb of the Virgin *Mary*, at the Incarnation; and, therefore, that *holy thing*, born of the Virgin, shall be called the SON of GOD, Luke 1:35. But GOD the FATHER, is also called, the GOD and FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST by office-character; because CHRIST, as GOD-Man-Mediator in all the transactions of the Covenant, as it concerns his Church, stands in his office-character as JEHOVAH'S servant, Isaiah 42:1; Matthew 12:18; Psalm 89:3-4. So that it is highly proper, as often as we meet with this glorious Name of GOD the FATHER in the New Testament Scripture, and when spoken in reference to GOD the SON; that we should attend to the particular occasion, and observe; under divine teaching, in what relation it is spoken. Whether

in the equality of nature, and essence of the GODHEAD, by way of distinguishing the distinct Persons of GOD the FATHER, GOD the SON, and GOD the HOLY GHOST. Or whether to distinguish, the several office-characters of each Person of the GODHEAD, in the gracious transactions of Covenant-engagements, into which, each glorious Person, from all eternity entered and guaranteed to each other, by which GOD the FATHER chose the Church in CHRIST before the foundation of the world: Ephesians 1:4. GOD the SON betrothed the Church to himself for ever: Hosea 2:19; Isaiah 54:5, and became the Servant of JEHOVAH, in the time-state of the Church to redeem her from the ruins of the fall: Isaiah 53:4-6, and GOD the HOLY GHOST to anoint, both the glorious Head of his body the Church; and all his members; and to regenerate every individual of that body, when *dead in trespasses and sins*, Acts 10:38; 1 John 2:20; Ephesians 2:1.

There is an uncommon sweetness of expression in the title: *Father of mercies, and GOD of all comfort*: Not simply the GOD of all mercies, but the *Father* of them. As if to teach the Church, that whatever mercy a child of GOD wants, he will beget it for him. A child of GOD is, sometimes, from unbelief and temptation, apt to think, that his case is so singular as none ever was before; and as if no mercy could reach or suit it. This title blessedly comes in, to the relief of such a tried soul. GOD, your FATHER in CHRIST, will beget it for you. The mercies you need, shall so come to you from Him, and in so direct and personal a manner, as from the bowels of divine love, as shall manifest that He is the Father of mercies!

Neither is this all. For he is also *the GOD of all comfort!* All and every comfort, every sort, and degree of comfort; refreshing,

strengthening, sanctifying comfort: yea, the GOD of *all* comfort. Reader! Think how blessedly revealed, our Covenant GOD in CHRIST, stands related to his people, under those sweet titles! And, what endears the whole is, that it is not only GOD the FATHER in his Covenant-office and character which is so represented, but all the persons of the GODHEAD are the same, John 14:16; John 14:18.

I need not enlarge on what the Apostle hath observed of himself and his faithful companions in the ministry, in becoming channels for communicating comfort to the Church, by imparting portions of what they themselves received from the LORD. This is indeed among the blessed properties of grace, to diffuse of those streams which we ourselves receive, by watering the thirsty ground of our brother's vineyard. It is blessed to give and to communicate. And it is also in exact conformity to the very appointment of the ministry, Isaiah 40:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 2:7.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:5-7

(5) For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. (6) And whether we be afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation. (7) And our hope of you *is* steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so *shall ye be* also of the consolation.

The sufferings of CHRIST, which the Apostle here speaks of, cannot be supposed to mean CHRIST'S personal sufferings when on earth; but rather, the solemn Meditation upon them. While a child of GOD is receiving the blessed consequences of the LORD'S death, grace will cause him to call to mind, the vast purchase from the guilt and tremendous punishment due

to sin, by the blood of the cross, and his soul, will in consequence, at times, contemplate with holy sorrow, the wormwood and the gall. And perhaps *Paul's* expression of the sufferings of CHRIST, might have respect to the present afflictions in CHRIST'S members. There is a passage in the Apostle's Epistle to the *Colossians*, which may assist to throw some light upon the subject: *Who now rejoice (saith Paul) in my sufferings. for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of CHRIST in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the Church*, Colossians 1:24. By which we seem authorized to conclude, that the sympathy of CHRIST with his members is such, that what they feel, JESUS knows, and hath affections for them, suited to this relationship. These sufferings of CHRIST in his members have no relation in point of satisfaction to make amends for offended justice. The most ample retribution hath been made, in the obedience and death of CHRIST once for all, Hebrews 10:14. But these sufferings are perfectly distinct from every idea of satisfaction. They are the consequences of the present imperfect state of being in which CHRIST'S members are; therefore, while any of His remain under any of the consequences of imperfection and sorrow, CHRIST feels for them; and as such, they may be called his sufferings in them. And this explains that sweet Scripture: *Whoso toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye*, Zechariah 2:8. Hence, CHRIST called from Heaven on Saul: *why persecutest thou me?* Acts 9:5. Reader! what a precious thought! Surely, every child of GOD ought to encourage it. He may say, Jesus, though at the fountain-head of glory and joy, and compleat as he is in his own Person, in every thing that is blessed; yet in his members, he enters into all their concerns. He feels for them, participates with them, and hath not only all

the mercies of his *divine* nature, going forth in continual watching over them; but by virtue of his human nature, he doth as much atke part with them, as a man pities and feels for his friend. Yea! The child may, and ought to say: my GOD, my SAVIOR, my JESUS; might as soon cease to be GOD, or cease to be man, or the union of both be done away, as cease to enter into all and every concern of his people!

But *Paul* adds another sweet observation to this subject. He saith, that as the sufferings of CHRIST abound in his people, so their consolation abounded by CHRIST. By which I apprehend the Apostle meant, that CHRIST becomes the source of every consolation to his redeemed. Not his gifts, not his graces, but himself. CHRIST is the whole consolation of the Church. Hence those of the faithful, who, taught of God the HOLY GHOST to be on the look out for CHRIST'S coming, at the time when the Son of God appeared in substance of our flesh, were said to have been *waiting for the consolation of Israel*, Luke 2:25.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:8-11

(8) For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: (9) But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: (10) Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver *us*; (11) Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift *bestowed* upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

The imagination can hardly conceive, to what distresses, and exercises, the first Preachers of the Gospel were exposed in those times of the Apostles. *Paul* hath given some account of it, in a future Chapter (2 Corinthians 11:23). But, what I

particularly beg the Reader to remark, is the blessed view the Apostle had upon the occasion, when he saith, that he and his companions had *the sentence of death in themselves*, that their sole confidence might be in the LORD. He doth not mean GOD'S sentence of death, or the sentence of any court of judicature. But their own views of death were such at the time, that they had death so full in prospect, that there seemed, speaking after the manner of men, as if there was no way to escape.

And, how graciously the Apostle ascribes their deliverance to the LORD. And how confidently, in past experience, doth he speak of the sure expectation of future deliverances. He counts the past, and the present, as pledges of all to come. The LORD *hath* delivered: he *doth* deliver; and he *will* deliver. Reader! it is very blessed, when faith, from past proofs of GOD'S faithfulness, finds strength for all future emergencies. Hath GOD in CHRIST been faithful to every generation of his people, and shall he not prove so to me? Shall he cease to be JEHOVAH now? Nay, have I not proved his Covenant-love, and truth, all the way along, to the present hour; and shall I, towards the close of my warfare, begin to question it? Oh! how blessed it is, when a child of GOD can so live by faith, and cleave to JESUS, when all comforts in flesh and blood, seem to be sinking under the feet.

The Apostle while looking solely to the LORD, doth not despise, but rather invite, the prayer of faithful men. He knew that the LORD had commanded the Church to seek, by prayer the mercies they needed. *Thus saith the LORD GOD; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them*, Ezekiel 36:37.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:12-14

(12) For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward. (13) For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end; (14) As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also *are* ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.

I admire this appeal of the Apostle to the Church, concerning the purity of his life, and conversation, among the people. And this includes both his private deportment, and his public ministry. No fleshly wisdom, no self-preaching. *Paul's* whole Gospel walk, together with those of his companions in the ministry, was, under the grace of GOD, in simplicity and godly sincerity. Reader! what is the whole Gospel of CHRIST, but a plain, simple, and easy to be understood, plan of salvation, and of GOD'S own providing for the Church of CHRIST? Sweet is it, therefore, in the Preachers of it, when, as *Paul*, they can appeal to their hearers, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, they have gone in, and out, among them. See that solemn Scripture, 2 Corinthians 4:1-4.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:15-20

(15) And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit; (16) And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judea. (17) When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay? (18) But *as* God *is* true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. (19) For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, *even* by me and Silvanus and Timothy, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. (20) For all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

There are several things contained in these verses, which have a special and particular reference to the Church at *Corinth*, which will not require to be noticed. I mean such as the Apostle's intention of visiting them, and granting to them a second benefit. But I pass over these considerations, which are of a private nature, to attend to such, as are of a public concern to the whole Church of GOD, in all ages; and which are of too much importance to be hastily passed over. I pray the LORD to be the Teacher, both of him that writes, and him that reads, on this momentous doctrine.

And, *first*. I beg the Reader to observe what *Paul* saith, that his doctrine was not *yea*, and *nay*. He almost seems to swear to it. As GOD is true, saith he. These are solemn words. When JEHOVAH affirms any thing, of more than ordinary solemnity, his words are: *As I live, saith the LORD*. It is in the form of an oath. It is the LORD'S peculiar prerogative of speaking; and therefore highly unsuitable to be used in common conversation. *Paul*, therefore, is very solemn in what he saith. See Numbers 14:21; Isaiah 49:18; Jeremiah 22:24; Ezekiel 5:11 &c.

Secondly. What *Paul* preached, was not a *Yea* and *Nay* Gospel: that is, not an uncertain, peradventure creed. He did not halt between two opinions. Paul made it not a *yea*, and *nay*, whether JEHOVAH in his threefold character of Persons had, or had not chosen the Church in CHRIST, before the foundation of the world. He did not preach that CHRIST so died for the salvation of sinners that it was *yea*, and *nay*, how many would be saved, and how many not. He did not compliment man, at the excellence of GOD'S truth; and left it at a peradventure, whether after GOD the FATHER'S choice of

the Church, and CHRIST'S redemption of the Church, any of his little ones should perish! Oh! what a yea and nay doctrine is that, which makes the matter doubtful. As if GOD the FATHER had chosen, CHRIST'S death had purchased the salvation of his people, GOD the SPIRIT had regenerated his people; and yet it was yea, and nay, whether such should be saved. Well might the Apostle speak with such a vehemency, and appeal to GOD as true, that his doctrine, his preaching, his word, was of no such doubtful issue.

Thirdly. What *Paul* preached was, JESUS CHRIST the SON of GOD. And this was no yea and nay doctrine. JESUS CHRIST is the sum and substance of the whole Bible. JEHOVAH'S, that is, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST'S one grand and only Ordinance of Heaven for salvation. In JESUS CHRIST is included all. No moral essays. No covenant of works. No law and Gospel mingled together. Not partly man, and partly GOD. Not for man to do his best, (for that best would deserve condemnation,) and CHRIST to do the rest. But CHRIST all, and in all. This was what *Paul* preached. And in CHRIST all was yea, without nay.

Fourthly. All the promises in the Bible are to this amount. There is not a promise out of CHRIST. There is not a promise but in CHRIST. Until I have CHRIST, I have no claim to a single promise. CHRIST himself is the first Promise, which came in with the fall of man. *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*, Genesis 3:15. And all the after promises arise out of this. Hence, *all the promises of GOD in him, are yea, and in him, Amen:* that is, certain and sure.

This then, was the sum and substance of all *Paul's* preaching. And the glory of GOD became manifested by it, in every instance where the LORD confirmed it. Reader! pause over the subject; for it is highly interesting. Ask your own heart, whether the LORD hath given you such precious views, concerning the Yea, and Amen; the fulness, and suitableness, and all-sufficiency, which is in CHRIST JESUS?

2 CORINTHIANS 1:21-24

(21) Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, *is* God; (22) Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. (23) Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. (24) Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

I pray the Reader to attend, with all suitable regard, to what the Apostle hath here said. That the saints of GOD may be, and indeed are, by grace established in the faith, is a fundamental doctrine of Scripture; and the Apostle brings an additional testimony in this place, in confirmation of it. The everlasting uncertainty, that some poor precious, but weak saints, are at on this ground, doth by no means weaken, or make void, the doctrine. Every child of GOD desires to be at certainty, on a point of such infinite importance. And here the Apostle by the HOLY GHOST, declares, that GOD's people, when being regenerated, and brought into an apprehension of CHRIST, and our interest in him, are established and anointed. And He that doth this mighty act, and hath sealed, as well as anointed the Church, is GOD; who hath also given an earnest of his work by his SPIRIT in our hearts. Reader! as the point is of such high moment, I do pray you, that you will attend a little somewhat more particularly unto it.

And, *first*. Here is said to be an establishment of the child of GOD in grace. And, in confirmation that this is attainable in the present life, it should be observed, that all the Persons of the GODHEAD concur in it. By electing grace GOD the FATHER establisheth them in CHRIST. They are given to Him, accepted in Him, justified in Him, sanctified in Him; and made everlastingly happy in Him; in time, and to all eternity. They are beheld in CHRIST as one, and established in this oneness and union with Him: so that because He lives, they must live also. And they are anointed and sealed, as the sweet Scripture saith, by the earnest of the SPIRIT in their hearts. So that they have the united testimony of the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, to the great truth of their establishment.

But I cannot call that man established, whose mind is exercised with doubts, and fears, and misgivings! As long as there is a doubt remaining upon the mind; whether CHRIST hath, or hath not compleated deliverance for his people; and as long as the child of GOD is at doubts, and fears, and peradventures of his interest in CHRIST, there will be no solid, substantial joy and comfort in the soul. Oh! how sweet is it then when the soul is established, and is anointed in CHRIST, and sealed with the earnest of the SPIRIT in the heart!

I detain not the Reader, to make any further observations on the Apostle's appeal, as to his readiness, to visit the *Corinthians*. These things are all now passed by. But, I beg the Reader to notice with me, the striking conclusion of the Chapter; that it is *by faith the LORD'S people stand*. Sweet thought! No changeableness of men, no temptations of Satan, no undeservings of the LORD'S people destroy the perfection of CHRIST, which gives strength to faith. And this faith, is not

the *cause*, but the *effect*: not the *motive*, for which the LORD established his people; but the *result*. Oh! how blessed, that our safety, and security, is not founded *in, the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*.

Reflections

READER! let you and I seek for grace to do as *Paul* did; and, looking up with holy faith and love, to a Covenant GOD in CHRIST, bless the GOD and FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and hail him, *as the FATHER of mercies, and GOD of all comfort!* And oh! how sweet the thought to my soul, that as a FATHER of mercies, he can, and will beget mercies for me, suited to my wants, and to his glory. I shall have pardoning mercy, and renewing mercy, and refreshing mercy, yea, every mercy, to help in every time of need; for my GOD *can supply all my need according to his riches in glory in CHRIST JESUS*. And, he will not only be my Covenant-GOD, and FATHER in mercy; but the GOD of all comfort. Who then shall want comfort, who hath GOD for their portion? And who shall question divine love and faithfulness, when GOD hath given all mercy, and all comfort in his dear SON? Oh! for grace to be everlastingly reading, and enjoying the inscription of the cross: *He that spared not his own SON, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him, freely give us all things?*

Precious LORD JESUS! the Amen! the faithful, and true witness! Oh! how blessed, and delightful to my soul's joy, that the blessings in thee, and from thee, are not at a yea, and nay uncertainty; but all the promises in thee, are yea, and in thee Amen. LORD grant, that in thee, the testimony of *my* conscience may be in simplicity and godly sincerity; and that I

may thus have my conversation in the world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of thy great day, when I shall see thee as thou art, and dwell with thee for ever.

And oh! Almighty SPIRIT! do thou establish me, and anoint me, and seal me, to the day of redemption; that I may have *the earnest of the SPIRIT in my heart!*

Chapter 2

Contents

The Apostle prosecutes the Subject of his Epistle in this Chapter. Very blessedly he speaks the inmost Feelings of his Soul, and finds cause to bless GOD, for causing him always to triumph in CHRIST.

2 CORINTHIANS 2:1-13

(1) But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness. (2) For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me? (3) And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is *the joy* of you all. (4) For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you. (5) But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all. (6) Sufficient to such a man *is* this punishment, which *was inflicted* of many. (7) So that contrariwise ye *ought* rather to forgive *him*, and comfort *him*, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. (8) Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm *your* love toward him. (9) For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things. (10)

To whom ye forgive any thing, I *forgive* also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave *it*, for your sakes *forgave I it* in the person of Christ; (11) Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices. (12) Furthermore, when I came to Troas to *preach* Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, (13) I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.

The greater part of the subject, connected with those verses, is of a personal nature, and hath reference to some events, which took place in the Church of *Corinth*, which the Apostle had thought it necessary to reprove. But with that tenderness which distinguished *Paul's* character, fearing he might have used more sharpness, than the persons conceived necessary, he here aims to soften all the former asperity, and to sooth their minds with love. Our great improvement from the passage will be to observe, how much grace, and wisdom it requires, in cases of Church government, to know how to temper suited firmness in reprehension, with tenderness and compassion; lest, as the Apostle saith, *Satan* should take advantage of the corruption of the mind, and stir up schism in the Church of God.

2 CORINTHIANS 2:14-17

(14) Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. (15) For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: (16) To the one *we are* the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who *is* sufficient for these things? (17) For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

There is an infinite extent of subject, opened in these words. Triumph in CHRIST, and always to triumph in CHRIST, not only runs through the whole time-state of the Church; but reacheth into thee eternal world, and being always, the same source for triumph in CHRIST must be endless also. The Reader will indulge me I hope, with trespassing in some little portion upon his time, to speak of a few at least, of those very blessed and precious views, which arise therefrom.

And, *first*. *Paul* thanks GOD for those triumphs in CHRIST. And well he might: for very evidently, the whole Persons of the GODHEAD have concurred in affording cause for those holy joys in CHRIST, which are so great, so blessed, and so everlasting.

GOD the FATHER, in constituting CHRIST in his headship to the Church, hath opened a source of unspeakable delight, in all that CHRIST, as CHRIST is; in all that he hath done, is doing, and will to all eternity do, for his Church, and his people; and in all the relationships in which he stands, to his body the Church, being *the fulness that filleth all in all*. In the great office-character which the Scriptures represent, of GOD the FATHER, we contemplate CHRIST, as the gift of GOD; in whom the Church was chosen, and, to whom the Church was given, and by whom the Church is everlastingly blessed and sanctified. So that while the Church triumphs in CHRIST, and must for ever triumph in CHRIST, it is truly delightful to eye the love of GOD the FATHER, in the appointment and blessing, and making happy the Church in CHRIST, through the whole time-state of the Church,, and to all eternity. And, it is one of the highest felicities in a life of faith, to be enabled by grace, to keep up, and maintain holy communion, and fellowship with the FATHER, and with his SON, JESUS CHRIST; in eyeing GOD the

FATHER'S love in this Covenant-transaction, in, and through, and with CHRIST from everlasting. *I have! said* (said JEHOVAH) *mercy shall be built up for ever*. How is this accomplished? The LORD adds: *I have made a Covenant with my chosen*, Psalm 89:2-3.

In like manner, GOD the HOLY GHOST, in his office-work, in Covenant-engagements, becomes an equal source, in causing the Church to triumph in CHRIST; both in his unction on the Person of CHRIST, and the anointing of his members. By his regenerating; illuminating, and quickening influences, in the souls of the people, gives the light of the knowledge of the glory of GOD, in the face of JESUS CHRIST. So that, when at any time, a child of GOD is triumphing in CHRIST, it is by the immediate work of GOD the SPIRIT. He takes of the things of CHRIST, and sheweth to us. His great work is to comfort the LORD'S people; by giving them sweet, and precious apprehensions of CHRIST'S fulness, suitableness, and all-sufficiency, and their interest therein. And thus, by opening to the Church's view, the love, and grace, and compleatness of JESUS and drawing out the soul, in acts of faith upon CHRIST'S Person, and blood, and righteousness; he begets a joy and peace in believing, whereby the believer abounds in hope, and always triumphs in CHRIST.

And, with respect to GOD the SON in his gracious office of GOD-Man-Mediator; every thing in CHRIST, and belonging to CHRIST, opens a source of continual triumph. The Church glories, in his Person, as GOD-Man-Mediator; glories in his Headship; and as her Husband, Surety, Brother, Redeemer, Advocate, Friend. Every act of CHRIST, every miracle of CHRIST, perfection of CHRIST, promise of CHRIST, word of CHRIST; in

short, all of CHRIST, and in CHRIST, and from CHRIST, open unceasing causes of triumph, and joys. Hence, the Church in one of her hymns exults, and sings: *I will love thee, O LORD my strength. The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my GOD, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, the horn of my salvation, and my high tower,* Psalm 18:1-2.

But, while we contemplate the security the Church hath, from all the Covenant-engagements of the whole Persons of the GODHEAD for unceasing triumphs in CHRIST; we must not overlook what *Paul* hath added, of making manifest the sweet savor of his Name in every place. This forms a beautiful and refreshing view of JESUS; and I beg the Reader's indulgence for a moment, to dwell upon it.

The Church felt the blessedness of this, when she said to her LORD: *because of the savor of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth.* Song of Solomon 1:3. And very certain it is, that when at any time, from the grace and unction of the HOLY GHOST, the Person of JESUS is made manifest to the souls of his people; the savor of this knowledge becomes more fragrant, and yields a richer perfume than all the spices of the East. Every thing in CHRIST becomes precious. His double nature, as *Emmanuel*, GOD and Man in one Person, the wonder of Heaven and of earth, hath such a blessedness in it, that whenever GOD the HOLY GHOST maketh manifest the knowledge of it in the heart, it begets a *joy unspeakable and full of glory.* Reader! hath the LORD the SPIRIT made manifest the sweet savor of it to your soul? Yes! if so be, from a thorough conviction, wrought by the LORD, both of CHRIST'S GODHEAD, and his Manhood, your

apprehension of Him is such as to look up to him in the union of both, as the LORD your righteousness.

As GOD, the savor of such a knowledge enables you by faith to be well assured, that all he is, and all he hath *done*, and all he is now doing, and all he, stands engaged to do, is, and cannot but be effectual, because he is GOD. Hence his betrothing the Church from everlasting, is unalterable, unchangeable, and for ever, Hosea 2:19. The whole work, in the time-state, when he offered himself a sacrifice, must be effectual: for by that one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified, Hebrews 10:14. His righteousness fully competent to justify his Church and people; his blood to cleanse them; his Person to bear them up, through all the time-state of their continuance on earth; and to bear them on, through all the swellings of Jordan; and bear them in, to his everlasting kingdom: because he is GOD.

And as he is man, there is an infinite sweetness in this nature united to his GODHEAD, which gives a savor of loveliness, and affection, to endear him to his people; that the souls of the redeemed find a confidence to go to him for all they stand in need of, since they go to one that is of their own nature, who knoweth their feelings by his own; and in the administration of mercy, doth it in such a way, that while it is the mercy of GOD, whereby it is everlasting, and cannot be exhausted, it is also the kindness and fellow feeling of the man, and such as one man might be supposed, if he knew all cases of need as CHRIST doth, to manifest to another. Reader! what are your views of this representation of JESUS? Can you express *Paul's* words from the same cause, and thank GOD, who always

causeth you to triumph in CHRIST, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge, in your heart?

I pray the Reader to pause, over the scripture which follows, in the relation *Paul* gives of his ministry, that it became unto GOD a sweet savor in CHRIST in them that are saved, and in them that perish. As we read the solemn, but precious words, the people of GOD rejoice; but they rejoice with trembling. The sentence is like the pillar of the cloud in the camp of Israel. To GOD'S people, light, and life, and joy. To the enemies of our GOD and of his CHRIST, darkness, death, and sorrow, Exodus 14:19-20.

In them that are saved (saith the Apostle,) we are a *sweet savor of CHRIST*. Sweet indeed! For what can be so grateful to the children of GOD, chosen in CHRIST, when gathered out of the offences of a fallen, sinful, and loathsome nature; to have all the fragrant graces of the SPIRIT manifested to their consciences, and shed abroad in their hearts, *to the acknowledgment of GOD, and of the FATHER, and of CHRIST; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge:* and to behold their compleatness *in Him* ? Colossians 2:2-3; Colossians 2:10.

And I pray the Reader to remark, unto whom those that thus minister in divine things are said to be made this sweet savor. It is unto GOD. Yes! for their commission is from Him and their ministry is unto His glory. It is the LORD that makes them this sweet savor. For in themselves they are nothing. They have an unsavoriness of corruption by reason of sin, as well as those they minister unto. And, what they minister is not their own, but the LORD'S. It is JESUS they hold forth to his people,

to whom they are a sweet savor; because his suitableness, and all-sufficiency for salvation in his blood and righteousness, become very precious when the poor lost soul, through divine teaching discovers, that there is salvation in no other; neither is there any other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, Acts 4:12.

But it is said also, that they are a sweet savor of CHRIST, not only in them that are saved, but in them that perish. Yes! For the sweet savor of CHRIST loseth nothing of its fragrancy because men despise it. GOD'S justice, and wisdom, in redemption by CHRIST, are everlastingly displayed, and even upon sinners themselves, who reject such great salvation. For we are taught, that GOD'S glory will be as compleatly manifested at the last day, in the destruction of sinners, as in the salvation of saints, Psalm 110 throughout; Ephesians 1:10. And the sweet savor of CHRIST will then be fully manifested. It was with an eye to the same doctrine that *Joshua* said unto *Achan* in the moment of his destruction: *My son! give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD GOD of Israel, and make confession unto him*, Joshua 7:19. And most unquestionably, the divine glory is, and must be, as fully displayed in the administration of his justice, as in his mercy. CHRIST therefore is a sweet savor of JEHOVAH'S wisdom, sovereignty, and rectitude, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. And well might *Paul* sum up the solemn account with demanding: *who is sufficient for these things?* Who indeed can be competent to form a single thought by way of explaining, how it is that *some* should have their spiritual senses called forth into exercise, so that CHRIST'S name, Person, blood, righteousness; yea, all and every thing

in CHRIST, and belonging to CHRIST, become more precious, than thousands of gold and silver: whilst *others* hate his name, his people, and all the precious doctrines of salvation. Who is sufficient to discover the cause? And how shall it be accounted for, but by referring it unto the sovereign will, and pleasure of GOD! One line of our dear LORD's, sweetly settles the point, and, properly considered, silenceth every objection: *Even so, FATHER! for so it seemed good in thy sight, Matthew 11:26.* But Reader! shall not you and I, if so be the LORD by his grace hath made CHRIST a sweet savor of life unto life, to our souls; shall not we find cause to cry out with the wondering Apostle, and say as he did: LORD! *how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?* John 14:22.

Reflections

READER! may the LORD give grace to fix our eyes, our hearts, our whole souls, upon the person of JESUS until like *Paul* we can, and do cry out, with the same full assurance of faith: *Now, thanks be unto GOD, which always causeth us to triumph in CHRIST.* Oh! the blessedness of having the sweet savor of his knowledge, always upon the mind! And do we not know, that from being secretly made one, in the members of his mystical body, the persons of all his redeemed are so secured, in all the blessed effects of his blood, and righteousness, that there is an everlasting cause to triumph in Him, amidst all the discouragements we meet with in ourselves.

And, oh! Almighty GOD and Father! when I consider, that it is unto thee, CHRIST is a sweet savor, in them that are saved,

and in them that perish; oh! how refreshing to my soul is the blessed consideration, that all CHRIST is, and all our enjoyments in CHRIST are; thy love is in all. And GOD the SPIRIT, no less brings home my LORD, the LORD of life and glory to my affection, and gives me *to rejoice, in hope of the glory of GOD*. Again, again I say; nor shall the sweet words cease, until I come to see my GOD in glory: *Now thanks be unto GOD which always causeth us to triumph in CHRIST!*

Chapter 3

Contents

In this Chapter, which is but short, though sweet, the Apostle appeals to the Hearts of the Corinthians, as Proofs of his Ministry. He draws a beautiful Comparison, between the Ministration of the Law, and the Gospel; to shew the vast Superiority of the latter.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-6

(1) Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some *others*, epistles of commendation to you, or *letters* of commendation from you? (2) Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: (3) *Forasmuch as ye are* manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. (4) And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: (5) Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is* of God; (6) Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

What a very high proof of the truth of CHRIST'S Gospel must that be, which makes an immediate appeal to the hearts and

consciences of men? And what can a Church or People desire more, than when their servants (for the highest Apostles are no more) bring those credentials with them, that they are sent of GOD? Reader! pause over the Apostles' statement, for it holds good, as much now, as in the days of the Apostles. Where GOD the HOLY GHOST hath a people, the LORD will send servants to minister to that people in divine things. See, in confirmation, that promise, Jeremiah 3:15. And where the LORD sends his servants, the same LORD will give testimony to the word of his grace, Isaiah 52:6-9. And do observe, the beautiful figure *Paul* makes use of, to prove his Apostleship by. *Ye are our Epistle* (said he) *written in our hearts; known and read of all men.* Yes! For when the LORD the SPIRIT, who sent the Apostle and his fellow servants to the *Corinthians*, and gave them a door of utterance to the truths of GOD, gave also a door of entrance into his people's hearts; and by his regenerating grace, awakened them to the knowledge of sin, to the cordial reception of, and belief in, the LORD JESUS CHRIST: these precious things proved, that the Gospel they preached, was not a yea and nay doctrine, but that *all the promises of GOD, in CHRIST JESUS, were Yea, and Amen, unto the glory of GOD by his servants' ministry.* This was a demonstration of the word, and power. This manifested both the people's interest *in CHRIST*, and the servants' being sent *by CHRIST*; and mutually tended to comfort and rejoice the heart, both of the minister and people, giving such decided testimony *to the truth as it is in JESUS*; when the Gospel came, *not in word only, but in power, and in the HOLY GHOST, and in much assurance.* 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10.

Reader! I beseech you, do not dismiss the subject, to which this statement of the Apostle leads, without first framing from it a rule, to estimate every Church of CHRIST upon earth. Depend upon it, as the Church of GOD is the same in all ages of the world, the same standard for decision, concerning the truths of GOD, will be found a faithful, and unerring rule, to form just, and infallible conclusions. Where CHRIST hath a people to gather from among the carnal world, and where he sends his Gospel to be instrumental to gather them; those blessed effects will follow. What JESUS said upon another occasion, in relation to the judgment of men at large, holds equally good, in ascertaining the characters of his sent servants. *Ye shall know them by their fruits*, Matthew 7:16.

The servant of the LORD, and of the highest order in that service, and endued with the greatest gifts, considers himself but as the servant of the LORD's people. So commanded JESUS: and so all faithful ministers know. *Whosoever will be great among you, (said that humble LORD,) let him be your minister; and whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.* And then, as if to endear the charge still more, JESUS added: *Even as the SON of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*, Matthew 20:26-28. We are *stewards*, said *Paul*, not LORDS, over GOD'S heritage. Servants, not masters. One is your Master, even CHRIST, 1 Corinthians 4:1; Matthew 23:8.

And as in character, so in office. They who are Epistles in the hearts of the LORD'S people, are they that feed the flock, not fleece it. They that preach CHRIST JESUS the LORD, not themselves, 2 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Peter 5:2. Regenerated in their own souls, before they go forth as instruments in the LORD'S hand, to the service of others, whom the LORD will regenerate; they hold forth the word of life. And, ordained by the HOLY GHOST to the immediate work of the ministry, before they labor in the word and doctrine; they watch for men's souls as they that must give account, Acts 13:1-4; Hebrews 13:17. So that if the Reader be earnest, as that he need be earnest, (for nothing this side the grave can be equally earnest,) to ask of JESUS, as the Church did: *Tell me, O thou whom any soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon?* Song of Solomon 1:7. These are the Shepherds' tents, to which the LORD directs. The people are the ministers' epistles; known and read of all men. Both minister and people are taught of GOD: and great will be the peace of the people, Isaiah 54:13. They know the joyful sound, in the everlasting love of GOD the FATHER; the grace, blood-shedding, righteousness, and finished salvation of the LORD JESUS CHRIST with all the blissful gifts, and manifestations of GOD the HOLY GHOST. These form indeed, a joyful sound, and they are blessed in knowing it; for they walk in the light of GOD'S countenance, Psalm 89:15. *Paul* might well call the people so taught, his Epistle. We are, said he to them, your rejoicing, as ye also are our's, in the day of the LORD JESUS, 1 Corinthians 1:14.

Reader! while I recommend the subject, in the most affectionate manner, to your most serious consideration, I

entreat you not to overlook what the Apostle so frequently in his Epistles dwells upon; his own weakness, and the sense he had of his own insufficiency, in ministering in the service of the LORD. This view of *Paul* indeed, will only strengthen yet more what went before. For if so highly taught, a servant of CHRIST refers all the success of his labors, into His sovereign power, who alone could make him an able minister, of the New Testament; how needful must it be, in all inferior servants of the LORD, to see that *all their sufficiency is of GOD?*

2 CORINTHIANS 3:7-16

(7) But if the ministration of death, written *and* engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which *glory* was to be done away: (8) How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? (9) For if the ministration of condemnation *be* glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. (10) For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. (11) For if that which is done away *was* glorious, much more that which remaineth *is* glorious. (12) Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: (13) And not as Moses, *which* put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: (14) But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which *veil* is done away in Christ. (15) But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. (16) Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

I call upon the Reader, on this paragraph to remark with me, the striking contrast the Apostle hath drawn, in the ministration of the word, between the Law, and the Gospel. No subject can be more interesting to regard. And I crave

indulgence, from its being brought before us, to state it somewhat particularly.

Now the Reader should first very carefully observe, that by the terms which the Apostle makes use of, for explaining the doctrines he had in view to teach the Church: of the *New Testament*, as distinguished from the *Old*; and the *spirit*, as distinguished from the *letter*; he is by no means speaking slightly of the Old Testament Scripture, as if the whole word of GOD, was not equally sacred and blessed. This would be a perversion of the Apostle's meaning. The Bible, indeed, is distinguished by the different names of the Old Testament, and the New, for the better apprehension of the different dispensations under which the Church lived. But, as the Church herself is but one, so the word of GOD is but one; and both Testaments have ministered, and do minister, but to the one Church of CHRIST, and that with equal blessedness, according to their different dispensations.

Neither, by the name New Testament, is in the least meant any thing new in the Almighty Author of salvation, *who is the same, yesterday, and to day, and for ever*: Hebrews 13:8, or, in the Covenant of grace, which is, in its very nature, an everlasting Covenant, founded in the antient settlements of eternity, between all the Persons of the GODHEAD, before the world began, Psalm 89:2-3. Neither is the revelation of this Covenant *new*. For it came in immediately upon the fall, and was made known to *Adam* in the garden, in the first promise, which folded up in its bosom, every other: even CHRIST, and all his fullness, and all-sufficiency. And every thing under the law, by precept, type, sacrifice, or shadow; preached CHRIST in figure, as much as the Gospel in substance. But the New

Testament, is so called, to distinguish it from the Old, because it now holds forth, what all along had been promised, as newly accomplished and fulfilled; and as compleating JEHOVAH'S revelation of grace to his Church and people.

In like manner, the distinction between the letter, and the spirit: these terms have no respect whatever to intimate, any difference in the Scripture writings, of the Old Testament and the New. The Gospel is as much written in letter, as the law, and both equally the words of GOD. But the sense is, that GOD'S word, in the mere letter, without the quickening influence of the SPIRIT, doth not minister to life, And this is as much applicable to the mere written letter of the Gospel without the SPIRIT, as to the law. Hence Paul puts the case, that the Gospel may be hid, to them that are lost, 2 Corinthians 4:3. And the LORD JESUS, in his parable of the stony ground hearers, very plainly proves that it is not the mere hearing of the Gospel, which gives life. Matthew 13:20 &c,

But, while the Reader forms clear apprehensions, in his judgment, concerning the names and terms the Apostle makes use of on this subject, let him next observe, with me, (and what indeed becomes most interesting to observe,) the vast distinction the Apostle draws between the killing nature of the letter, and the life-giving power of the SPIRIT. Here lays the whole stress of *Paul's* statement. The law may be said to kill; because it holds forth precepts, without affording the least help to obey. And as it holds forth the precepts to fallen sinful men, who in themselves have no power or ability to obey, it may be truly said to kill. It is, therefore, the ministration of death; whereas, the SPIRIT giveth life. It giveth

life from itself, nothing in the receiver disposing to it. In whatever sense we accept these words, they are most blessed, and reviving to the soul. If by the SPIRIT, the Apostle meant, GOD the SPIRIT; he is the source of all-quickening, and life-giving influences. See verse 17 (2 Corinthians 3:17). Or if the Gospel, in distinction to the law, be here intended; then it will follow, that the Gospel, in the hand of GOD the HOLY GHOST, giveth life. CHRIST calls his Gospel by that name. *The words that I speak unto you, (saith JESUS,) they are spirit, and they are life.* And unquestionably they ever must be so, when JESUS speaketh to his people, John 6:63. But void of his quickening power, the LORD himself hath seven times recorded it, in his holy word; that the CHRISTless shall hear, and understand not; and see, but perceive not, Isaiah 6:9; Matthew 13:14; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:26; Romans 11:8.

The Apostle, by way of further illustration, hath added a striking distinction, between the effect of the law, and that of the Gospel. The ministry of the law by *Moses*, he calls the ministration of death. The blessed properties of the Gospel by CHRIST, the ministration of life. The law, *Paul* proves, could produce nothing but death; for it universally condemned the whole race of *Adam*. Even the children of GOD, from being born in the stock of *Adam*, came under the condemnation of it. But as in CHRIST the law is honored, and all the seed of CHRIST considered holy in Him; the Gospel, by CHRIST, is called the ministration of life. And, therefore, there is a glory in this dispensation, which far exceeds the law by *Moses*, even had there been a possibility of obedience to it. Reader! it is very blessed to read *Moses* in CHRIST; and to see that CHRIST *is the*

end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, Romans 10:4. The Church is comforted in the prospect, that *the veil which is spread over all nations,* (or over GOD's people which are scattered in all nations,) *shall be done away,* Isaiah 25:7.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:17-18

(17) Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord *is,* there *is* liberty. (18) But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.

What a sweet thought is here suggested to the Church, in the divine presence, and the freedom he brings with him. *Where the SPIRIT of the LORD is, there is liberty.* Yes! When the child of GOD, from the Adam-nature of sin and *Satan*, by regeneration, is brought into the liberty wherewith the LORD makes his people free; then *they are free indeed,* John 8:36. They then have access to the throne, at all times, upon all occasions. Having received the Spirit of adoption, they cry *Abba, FATHER!* And the SPIRIT *beareth witness with their spirits, that they are children of GOD,* Romans 8:16. They are freed from the burden of sin, from the guilt of sin, from the penalty due to sin, from the dominion of sin; and from all the terrors; and everlasting condemnation of sin. GOD's law is magnified, and made honorable in CHRIST. Justice is satisfied. The accusations of *Satan* are answered. Conscience is appeased; and the believer, having passed from death unto life, hath now found peace with GOD, in the blood of the cross: for *there is no condemnation to them that are in CHRIST JESUS, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* Blessed be GOD! where the SPIRIT of the LORD is, there is liberty! Reader! let us seek grace, to learn our blessedness,

from this work of GOD the SPIRIT, and to bring it into actual enjoyment, from day to day. How fully doth it prove, our oneness *with* CHRIST, and our interest *in* CHRIST. How ought it to bear us up, against every temptation, every sorrow, trial, and affliction! And what a security against sickness, death, judgment, and all the fears of futurity. *Where the SPIRIT of the LORD is, there is liberty!* Oh! the freedom to a throne of grace now; and the assurance of access, and every privilege of the redeemed, to a throne of glory for ever! *At that day ye shall know, that I am in my FATHER, and ye in me, and I in you!* John 14:21. Oh! the blessedness, through the SPIRIT, and the blood, and righteousness of the LORD JESUS, to go every day, and all the day, to a throne of grace now, and to a throne of glory for evermore!

I detain the Reader, just to observe, the beauty and blessedness which the Apostle closeth the Chapter with, in relation to CHRIST. Beholding as in a glass, (or speculum,) the glory of the LORD, we are changed into the same image. Yes! when GOD the SPIRIT enables the child of GOD to behold CHRIST, this begets an assimilation: similar to the effect in looking to a glass, the one is formed by the other. So by beholding JESUS in his glory, admiring his Person, having our souls ravished with his love, we are led to imitate what we love: and, through the SPIRIT of the LORD, we grow up into a desire to be like him, to resemble what we love, and to imitate what we admire. Precious JESUS! be it my portion, *to behold thy face in righteousness, that when I awake up, I may be satisfied with thy likeness,* Psalm 17:15.

Reflections

READER! let you and I, learn to rightly value our privileges!. Blessed be GOD, we are not come to the Mount, that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and blackness, and darkness, and tempest! Oh! what an awful dispensation, to shadow forth the terror, and dread, with which the broken law of GOD stood over the alarmed conscience of the trembling, guilty soul! Well might it be called, the ministration of death. For it denounced everlasting indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul of man that doeth evil. Reader! what a mercy is it, that the poor sinner is come not to Mount *Sinai*, but Mount *Zion*; not to the law to condemn, but to the Gospel to save; even to JESUS *the Mediator of the New Covenant; and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel*. LORD! Take away every remaining vail, of darkness and unbelief. Cause my soul, with open face, to behold as in a glass, the glory of the LORD! Cause my soul to be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the SPIRIT of the LORD. And do thou, Almighty SPIRIT, grant me freedom of access, to the mercy-seat of my GOD, in CHRIST. For where thou, LORD, art, there is liberty. Oh! for liberty to pray, to plead, to wrestle with my GOD in prayer, in the blood, obedience, and death, of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. Give me, LORD, that sweet spirit of adoption, that I may be no longer under a spirit of bondage, but cry, Abba FATHER! And, oh! do thou be an unceasing witness to *my* spirit, that I am a child of GOD!

Chapter 4

Contents

This is a most beautiful, and interesting Chapter. The Apostle sets forth, the solemn Views he had of the Ministry, and his Earnestness to be found faithful, in the discharge of it. He speaks of his great Exercises, in consequence thereof; and tells the Church, of the Supports he had in JESUS, to carry him through all.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-7

(1) Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; (2) But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. (3) But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: (4) In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (5) For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. (6) For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (7) But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

I beg the Reader to notice with me, what a sweet, and gracious frame of mind, the Apostle was in, when he wrote this Chapter. If it be asked, what gave it him? The answer is direct: none but GOD the SPIRIT, whose great work is consolation, could have imparted it. And in proof, let the Reader observe, how confidently the Apostle speaks, of *having received mercy*. It was not a matter of doubt or question with *Paul*, whether he stood before GOD in a justified state, or not. Had it been so, he would have fainted at times, as those men do, who make justification a variable, or uncertain thing. For, as long as this is questionable in the

mind and conscience; there will be no settled, steady, firm state, of trusting in GOD the FATHER'S covenant-love, and CHRIST'S all-sufficient merit, blood, and righteousness. But when a soul is conscious he hath received mercy, all cause for fainting ceaseth.

As this point is of immense consequence, in the life of every truly regenerated child of GOD, I would beg the Reader's patient attention to it, while, from *Paul's* example, in this place I take occasion to shew, the ground-work, and assurance, on which it is founded. I am not to be told, that the great mass, even of those who profess all the leading truths of the Gospel, are but too much living in a state of doubt, and suspense, on this most sweet, and precious point of faith. But this is from the weakness, and deficiency of their faith; and not from any defect in the principle itself. The faith of GOD'S people is supposed by the Gospel, to be a life of trust, assurance, and confirmation. The Prophet, ages before the coming of CHRIST, declared, that *the work of righteousness* (CHRIST'S righteousness) *shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever*, Isaiah 32: 17. And to this purport, the promise runs along with it, and keeps pace together. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee*, Isaiah 26:3. If, therefore, there remained any uncertainty, in respect to the justified state of a child of GOD, whom GOD by sovereign grace hath called, with an holy calling; those blessed Scriptures lose their power. That man cannot be said to have quietness, and assurance for ever, as an, effect of his interest in, and dependence upon, the righteousness of the LORD JESUS CHRIST; while the shadow of a

doubt remains in his mind, whether he hath received pardon, mercy, and peace, in the blood of the cross, and is justified by faith, throughout LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Now the ground-work, on which the child of GOD, truly taught of GOD, rests his full assurance of faith, and which keeps him, as Paul saith he was kept, from fainting, is the heart-felt conviction, that CHRIST, when he stood forth the Surety of his Church and people, truly, as the Prophet said of him, *finished the transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness*, Daniel 9:24. In all that high transaction, CHRIST acted as his peoples' Sponsor, and Surety; and therefore, not an atom of guilt, either original, or actual, was left unatoned, on his peoples' conscience. Now then, if I, or you, or any and every child of GOD, whom GOD hath effectually called by grace, believe the record, which GOD hath given of his dear SON, namely, that GOD hath given eternal life to his whole body the Church, in his dear SON; and that, by virtue of the infinite value and preciousness of his righteousness and blood-shedding, they are justified from all things; how is it possible that there can be any suspense, doubt, or misgiving, on this grand assurance, of the redeemed child of GOD's hope? Reader! do look, again and again, at the blessed frame of mind Paul was in, and which wholly arose from this one cause: and recollect, that this high privilege, was not *Paul's* privilege only; but the whole Church of GOD are equally begotten to it, and equally entitled to it, with the Apostle; because it ariseth not from any merit, or services in *Paul*, but the sole gift of GOD in CHRIST. Oh! my Brother! if like the Apostle, you would faint not, at any, and all the exercises, to which the LORD shall be pleased

to call you; see to it, that *Paul's* testimony is yours. As we have received mercy, we faint not.

What the Apostle adds, on the subject of the ministry, is very sweet, and highly instructive; though no doubt, it hath a special regard to those who labor in the word, and doctrine. The Reader, however, may here, as in many ether parts of the Apostolic writings, on the subject of the ministry, gather information, so as to form a correct judgment, of a pure Gospel, from one that is spurious; and of a faithful servant of CHRIST, from an unworthy hireling, John 10:12-13.

He that is faithful to GOD, and souls, holds forth the pure word of life, as *Paul* did: CHRIST, and him crucified; CHRIST and him glorified, as the all in all of JEHOVAH'S own providing, for the recovery of our fallen nature, from the Adam-ruin in which the Church is found, in her time-state of being, when CHRIST comes by his HOLY SPIRIT, to seek, and save, that which was lost. With this pure doctrine of the Gospel, the faithful servant in the ministry mingles nothing. He makes in his preaching, what JEHOVAH hath made for preaching, in his Covenant of grace, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the one, sole Ordinance of salvation: the ALPHA, and OMEGA; the First, and the Last: the Author, and Finisher, of faith. And, with this blessed topic of all his discourse, he mixeth no human doctrines, nor philosophy of men. He walketh *not in craftiness, nor handleth the word of GOD deceitfully*; but in the demonstration of the SPIRIT, and of power, *he commendeth himself to every man's conscience, in the sight of GOD*. Reader! see that your minister brings such proofs with him, that he is ordained to be a Preacher, and sent of the LORD. You cannot have a more infallible testimony to judge by, than when he preacheth

CHRIST, and only CHRIST: and GOD the HOLY GHOST sets to his seal, in your heart, to *the truth as it is in JESUS*. Sweet proof when your minister can say, as *Paul* did, to this Church at *Corinth: Ye are our Epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men!* 2 Corinthians 3:2.

Moreover, to the faithfulness and integrity of the preacher, he, adds the uprightness, and holy conversation, of the man. *He hath renounced* (as *Paul* terms it) *the hidden things of dishonesty*. He allures to CHRIST, by example, as well as by invitation. He is what he preacheth; and lives down evil report, by living up to the doctrine of GOD, his SAVIOR, in all things. It is a very blessed account, which the HOLY GHOST hath left upon record, of the servants who wrought in the temple work; that there was no reckoning made with them, of the money delivered into their hands, for they dealt faithfully, 2 Kings 12:15. And in every department of the ministry it will be the same, when men are not eye-servants, and men-pleasers, but as servants of CHRIST, doing the will of GOD front the heart, Ephesians 6:6. An holy calling *from* the LORD, and acting *near* the LORD, and under the eye *of* the LORD, will be an unceasing motive to renounce the hidden things of dishonesty. Oh! the blessedness of that Church, and that people, where both he that ministers, and they that are ministered unto, are thus under the sweet anointings of GOD the HOLY GHOST!

But what an awful Scripture is here, of an hidden Gospel? It is always an hidden Gospel, how loudly soever preached, or how clearly soever unfolded by human strength, unless GOD the SPIRIT, which at the first caused the light to shine out of darkness, at the original creation of nature; causeth the light

to shine out of darkness, in the new creation by grace, He, and He alone, it is, who gives the light of the knowledge of the glory of GOD, in the face of JESUS CHRIST. Reader! pause over the solemn account. As CHRIST was all along hidden, when preached in type, and figure, under the Old Testament dispensation, unless to His people, to whom the LORD the HOLY GHOST revealed him: So now, though openly and fully revealed, in the Scriptures of the New Testament; yet is he not known, or regarded by any, but by his Church when taught of GOD, And, what a tremendous blindness must it be, when *a* consequence so awful follows: *He is hid to them which are lost!*

By the god of this world, is meant *Satan*. Not that he is so. For GOD who made the world, is the Proprietor, and Governor of it; and all power is His, in Heaven, and in earth. But, by a figure of speech, *Satan* is very properly called the god of it, because by his having ruined our whole nature in *Adam*, all mankind are his lawful captives. Hence CHRIST calls him, *the Prince of this world*, John 12:31 and John 14:30. And if the dominion he hath acquired over our nature, by making our whole race his vassals, and slaves, constitute an authority; *Satan* hath it most compleatly: and would have had it, and that lawfully for ever, but for the interposition of CHRIST. *For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage*, 2 Peter 2:19. And by the way let me observe, it is evidently in allusion to this, GOD the FATHER speaks, when in his Covenant promises to our glorious Head, the LORD thus promiseth *Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? But thus saith the LORD: Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of*

the terrible be delivered. For I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children, Isaiah 49:24-25.

In what is said, of this malicious enemy, *blinding the eyes of them that believe not*, we are to understand, that *spiritual* blindness, which he hath induced by sin; and out of which, nothing but the arm of GOD, by giving new vision, and opening all the spiritual faculties of our souls, in regeneration, can accomplish. It is the soul's blindness, not the body. It is the *spiritual* apprehension, which is lost by original sin; not *natural* sight. *Adam* died to all spiritual knowledge, in the day he transgressed the divine commandment; and of consequence, all his posterity were involved in the same. And hence, we find multitudes among men, who have the quickest sight in mere natural things, are yet totally blind, to the apprehension of all spiritual things. What a mass of human learning, the present world hath furnished, from the accumulation of ages; while some of the wisest, and greatest of men, in this earthly Philosophy, have no one apprehension whatever, of their lost estate before GOD: no regard, nor affection, to the Person of CHRIST: and, in relation to their own souls, have never so much as heard, *whether there be any* HOLY GHOST. What a decided proof, of *spiritual* blindness, in the midst of the full blaze of *natural* knowledge?

And that this is a much more general state, in which men live, and in which they die, than is supposed, is evident, from the great disregard, and inattention to divine things, which are manifested in the world. Go into what company or society you may; where is the Person, or glory of CHRIST the topic of discourse? *They talk of vanity* (saith the Psalmist) *every one*

with his neighbor: with flattering lips, and with double heart, do they speak, Psalm 12:2. And, the indifferency with which they hear the Gospel, the unconcern about their everlasting welfare, the unconsciousness of sin, and the little regard to flee from the wrath to come, in seeking CHRIST, and his righteousness: these are most plain, and palpable evidences, of the spiritual blindness of such men's minds. It is of such the Apostle speaks, in this most alarming Scripture, when he saith: *If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.* Reader! hath the LORD brought you out of darkness, and the shadow of death, and burst your bands asunder? Have you felt sin, exceeding sinful? And is CHRIST exceedingly precious! 1 Peter 2:7.

I do not think it necessary, to detain the Reader with any additional observations on the subject of the Ministry, having already rather exceeded my usual limits. But it were sufficient to discover, that *Paul* preached, not himself, but CHRIST JESUS the LORD, whoever reads his Epistles; for his text, sermon, doctrine, substance, and application, is all CHRIST. And, whoever reads *Paul's* sermons will *as* plainly discover, that *Paul* preached wholly of grace; and that it was GOD alone who first commanded light from darkness, to whom he looked, to give light, and understanding in his hearers hearts. And whoever thus reads *Paul's* Sermons and Epistles, will as fully discover, the humbleness of *Paul's* mind; that he was truly conscious of being but a vessel, and that an earthly brittle one, in which the treasure of the Gospel was put. *Paul's* whole delight was, to be accounted nothing; so that his GOD; and SAVIOR, was the more glorified, Philippians 3:7-9. Reader! how truly graceful is humility! Matthew 18:1; Matthew 18:4.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:8-18

(8) *We are* troubled on every side, yet not distressed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair; (9) Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; (10) Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. (11) For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. (12) So then death worketh in us, but life in you. (13) We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; (14) Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present *us* with you. (15) For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. (16) For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. (17) For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; (18) While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

I bring the whole of those verses into one view, because the observations which arise out of them, are nearly to the same purpose. It is truly blessed to behold, the soul-exercises of the faithful, whether minister, or people, sanctified from an union with CHRIST. The Apostle enumerates within a little compass, great searchings of heart. They were always carrying their lives in their hands, while bearing about in their body, the dying of the LORD JESUS. Wheresoever they came, by whomsoever they were met; whether they were separated from each other, or went preaching the kingdom in company together; persecution was sure to follow. But *Paul* relates, what an happy frame they were preserved in by grace, in that, though troubled on every side, yet not distressed; though persecuted of men, yet never forsaken of GOD!

Reader! depend upon it, the consolations in CHRIST, never rise so high in the full tide of holy joy, as when the storm of persecution blows most violently. It is said, that music sounds always sweetest on the water. But whether it be so or not, it is very sure, that the melody of CHRIST'S voice, which is the sweetest of all music, we never hear so lovely, as when the floods of ungodly men, drive us to the LORD.

There are *two* sweet lessons, which this view of *Paul* and his companions instruct us in; and which, I beg GOD the HOLY GHOST to make me a practical scholar, under his divine teaching, in the exercise of, from day to day. The *one* is, the conviction, that all the afflictions of GOD'S people, are not only light afflictions of a moment; but that they work out for them, a for more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And the *other* is from whence the child of GOD may by faith fetch daily strength, to counteract, even in the moment of their pressure, their burden, and to bear up under them all. For this cause, saith *Paul*, we faint not, while we look not at the things which are seen; but at the things which are not seen.

In relation to the *former*. Grace in lively exercise, will never fail to comfort the soul, while making a right calculation, that this affliction, be it what it may, is fraught with blessing. It is not enough to the child of GOD, to say, that *it will do no harm*. For this is but a negative kind of comfort. But he ought to say, and he will say it when truly taught of GOD; *it will do good*. For though all afflictions in their nature, being the consequence of the fall, are in themselves evil; and work evil, to the whole Adam-nature, void of CHRIST: yet coming in and through the Covenant of grace in CHRIST; to the LORD'S people their very property is changed. Hence, the HOLY GHOST hath

caused it to be proclaimed in his Scriptures, that *all Things work together for good to them that love GOD; to the who are the called according to this purpose*, Romans 8:28. Reader do not forget this a child of GOD must be ultimately a gainer by every affliction, when sanctified.

In relation to the *latter*. We learn from *Paul's* example, from whom to gain strength, and where to direct our views for help, in every time of need. And depend upon it, while looking to JESUS, and in eyeing things which are eternal; all the short events of this dying, transitory world, will lessen in their view, like distant objects, too remote to engage our regard; or like the noise of distant voices, *in* which we have no concern. Reader! only calculate those great, and momentous things, with which the child of GOD is connected, from one eternity to another. GOD the FATHER'S everlasting love. GOD the SON'S Headship, Suretyship, and Relations. GOD the SPIRIT'S engaged grace, influences, and power. Here is enough to fetch comfort from for ever. Blessed SPIRIT! daily realize these precious things, and my interest in them, to my soul: and sure I am, I shall then faint not; for though the poor tabernacle of my body, *the outward man, perish; yet thus my inward man, will be renewed, day by day.*

Reflections

I would ponder well the contents of this sweet Chapter. What a mercy to a place, to a Church, to a people, is a faithful servant of the LORD JESUS CHRIST! What a mercy to that servant, that minister, that he hath this treasure, in an earthen vessel; that when creature-weakness is made

manifest, and successful in Creator-strength; it may lead his heart, to give all the glory to the LORD.

Blessed JESUS! make me an humble follower of those faithful servants of old, who were enabled through grace, to bear about with them always the dying of the LORD JESUS; that the life also of JESUS might be made manifest in their body. Oh! for grace to be kept above the afflictions of a moment, in the sure and certain prospect of that eternal glory, which shall be revealed. LORD! grant, that a believing view of that everlasting Covenant, which is ordered in all things and sure, and a consciousness through grace, of a personal interest in all the blessings of it; may keep my soul from fainting, under any of the exercises of the present time-state of existence. *Yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.* Oh! for a life of faith in full exercise, until *that which is perfect is come; and when that which is in part shall be done away.*

Chapter 5

Contents

The Apostle is here prosecuting, much the same Subject, as in the preceding Chapter. He speaks with full assurance of Faith, of his eternal Interests, He closeth the Discourse, with stating the Grounds of all Security in CHRIST.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-5

(1) For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2) For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

(3) If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. (4) For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. (5) Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

The Apostle opens this Chapter with a beautiful similitude, in comparing the human body, to that of an house, in which the soul is supposed to reside. And, from a well-grounded confidence, of an interest in CHRIST, he contemplates the prospect of the dissolution of the body, as an object more to be desired, than dreaded; knowing, as he saith, that when absent from the body, he should be present, in spirit, with the LORD. There is also another subject to which it hath respect, in allusion to the LORD JESUS. For as the personal body of CHRIST, became the temple of the indwelling residence of his divine nature; so the bodies of GOD'S people, are said to be the temple of the HOLY GHOST, 2 Corinthians 6:16. When, therefore, the bodies of GOD'S people are dissolved, that is, the earthly part returns to its original dust; there is still an union with CHRIST, both of soul, and body; and there is a portion, which death destroys not: for the saints of GOD, are said to *sleep in* JESUS, 1 Thessalonians 4:14. The voice from Heaven which *John* heard, declared them *blessed which die in the* LORD, Revelation 14:13. Death cannot dissolve this union. And it is remarkable, that GOD our SAVIOR called himself the GOD of *Abraham*, many hundred years after his death. And *Job* speaks as from the grave, of being remembered by the LORD, Job 14:15. Matthew 22:32.

The groaning *Paul* speaks of, every regenerated child of GOD knows. For carrying about with us a body of sin and death,

how is it possible but to groan, while the corrupt, and unrenewed nature of the body, is for ever opposing the soul if the Reader would attend *a* spiritual anatomical lecture on the dissection of the human heart, he may do it by reading the seventh Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans (Romans 7); especially from the 7th verse (Romans 7:7) to the end: where the Apostle hath opened in his own history, a compleat view, of the inward frames, and workings, of a child of GOD, when regenerated, and brought into an acquaintance with his own corrupt nature. From such a body of sin and death, when once a child of GOD is awakened, and regenerated; he groans to be delivered. Reader! do you know any thing of this? Have you that self-loathing, that self-abhorrence, from a conscious corrupt, sensual, earthly-minded heart; that you look toward to the humiliation of the grave, as a period of privilege, and deliverance, peculiarly dear to a regenerated soul? This is a trying question. But sure I am, the soul, whom GOD the SPIRIT hath regenerated, and brought into an acquaintance with himself; and with CHRIST, will know how to answer it, will enter into my views, by his own. My Brother! (I would say to every one of this description,) It is blessed, so to love CHRIST, as to loath self.

I admire the Apostle's referring all the work, as ultimately we shall all the glory, to GOD. He is indeed the Almighty Source, that causeth the whole change, from nature to grace; and maketh all that difference between the children of the kingdom, and the whole Adam-nature of darkness. It is GOD *which worketh in us, both to will, and to do of his good pleasure.* Reader! what a sweet thought! If you, or I, have our minds seasoned with grace: If GOD the FATHER from all

eternity chose us in CHRIST: If JESUS the SON of GOD, betrothed our persons to himself before all worlds; and hath redeemed us in this time state of our nature: If GOD the HOLY GHOST hath called us with an holy calling, and by his regenerating influence, hath made us new creatures in CHRIST: let us be always ready to ascribe all the glory to Him; for this is the earnest, and sure pledge of the SPIRIT!

2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-11

(6) Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (7) (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) (8) We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. (9) Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. (11) Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

The confidence the Apostle speaks of, is an unceasing confidence. Be speaks of it more than once, and calls it *always*. And if the Reader looks at the principle upon which it is founded, he will see, that it is not liable to any change, for it ariseth not from any fluctuating or uncertain cause; but is in itself a fixed and certain thing; namely, GOD'S Covenant-promises in CHRIST. It was thus holy men of old lived and died! They relied upon the Covenant-promises of GOD in CHRIST. *They walked by faith, not by sight*. They had never seen CHRIST in the flesh, none of the Patriarch believers. But what of that. They had seen CHRIST'S day afar off. They believed in what GOD had said. So that the things were in representation by faith, always in view: and their whole souls

rejoiced in the full expectation of them. Hence, they were confident of them; and whether in life, or death, they rejoiced *in hope of the glory of GOD*.

Reader! what saith your experience, to these things? Hath the same Almighty Teacher, who wrought this grace in their hearts; wrought it in yours? Hath the LORD given you also the earnest of the SPIRIT? What discoveries have you of CHRIST, of your interest in him, and your communion with Him? Are you sensible at times of his Person being present with you; that you walk with him by faith now, and are looking forward with pleasing hope, when you shall see him by sight, and dwell with him for ever?

Moreover, what are your apprehensions of the judgment-seat of CHRIST, before which you must shortly appear? We are all to receive there the things done in the body; whether by the things of regeneration wrought on the LORD's people, in bringing them into a justified state before GOD; or those who are found in guilt from the unawakened nature of *Adam*, and in a state of condemnation before GOD. Reader! it is a grand point of decision. For while all unawakened, unregenerated, and unrenewed men, must stand awfully condemned before GOD; we are expressly told, that *there is no condemnation to them that are in CHRIST JESUS*: for they are passed from death to life, and are freely justified in the grace which is in CHRIST JESUS, Romans 8:1; 1 John 3:14; Acts 13:39. Sweet thought! GOD's people are saved now, with an everlasting salvation. Their right, and title, to all Covenant blessings, and mercies, is founded in CHRIST. So that, as they are justified *now*, they cannot be condemned *then*. They must all appear indeed before the judgment seat of CHRIST; the righteous as well as

the wicked: *him that feareth GOD, as well as him that feareth him not.* But with very different views. *The wicked,* the Scripture saith, *shall be turned into hell, with all the people that forget GOD,* Psalm 9:17. But *the ransomed in Zion are said to return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads,* Isaiah 35:10. They are to have the whole Covenant transactions laid open to their view, and not only their acquittal from all law charges, all demands of justice, and all claims of obligation, proclaimed before a congregated world of men and angels; but their acceptance in CHRIST, their oneness, and right of union with CHRIST, most fully established, and confirmed for ever, And oh! what inconceivable rapture, will then break in upon the soul, when CHRIST shall own his Church, his Chosen, his *Segullah*, as the gift of his FATHER, the purchase of his blood, and the conquest of his SPIRIT. When he shall say: *Behold I, and the children whom thou hast given me!* Isaiah 8:18. Reader! what are your views of this subject. Who that hath such blessed prospects, and well certified, and made sure by divine teaching, but must at times, feel somewhat of the Apostle's feelings; and *be willing to be absent from the body, to be present with the LORD!*

2 CORINTHIANS 5:12-16

(12) For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to *answer* them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. (13) For whether we be beside ourselves, *it is* to God: or whether we be sober, *it is* for your cause. (14) For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: (15) And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. (16) Wherefore henceforth

know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we *him* no more.

I pass over several of the things contained within those verses, to attend more particularly, to what the Apostle saith in relation to the knowledge of CHRIST after the flesh. *Paul* knew nothing of CHRIST'S Person, during our LORD'S ministry: so that it is plain, somewhat more is meant by the expression, of knowing CHRIST after the flesh, than a mere personal knowledge of him, as men usually know one another. And the sense seems to be this: The one sacrifice of the LORD JESUS on the cross, is altogether so great and glorious, and hath such infinite value and efficacy in it, that it can be offered no more. But to know CHRIST after the flesh, that is coming again in the likeness of sinful flesh, would carry with it an idea as if that one offering of CHRIST needed to be repealed. A thing in direct opposition to the Whole Gospel. Reader! do not fail to observe, with what earnestness of affection the Apostle regarded the infinitely precious efficacy of CHRIST'S blood. So great to need nothing beside: so effectual, that by it, JESUS *hath forever perfected them that are sanctified!*

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-19

Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (18) And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

There is somewhat very blessed in what the Apostle hath here set down, both in its effects, and in its cause. *Paul* first marks the *effects*. A man in CHRIST is a new creature. How comes he

so? He then assigns the *cause*: the cause is of GOD. *All things are of GOD*. From everlasting, JEHOVAH in his threefold character of Persons, loved the Church in CHRIST, with an everlasting love. And each glorious Person gave manifestations of it. GOD the FATHER chose the Church in CHRIST, gave the Church to CHRIST, willed the being, and the well-being of the Church in CHRIST, before all worlds.: And when in the time-state of the Church, she fell in the Adam-nature of sin and transgression; GOD was in CHRIST reconciling the world the Church, unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. See 1 John 2:2 and Commentary. GOD the SON loved the Church, betrothed the Church to himself before time, and in time redeemed her by his blood. And GOD the HOLY GHOST anointed the Church with her glorious Husband and Head before all time, and in the day of time, in her effectual calling, regenerated her nature in CHRIST JESUS. Hence, in every individual instance of CHRIST'S mystical body, every one that is in CHRIST is a new creature.

And what is highly worthy the Reader's closest regard is this, that the new creature is a change of the whole man. A new *heart, and a new mind*, the LORD saith, *I will give you, and a right spirit I will put within you*, Ezekiel 36:26. So that it is a new *creature*, not a new *name*; a new *principle* altogether, not a new *opinion*. And indeed, the very name implies as much. For a new creature can only be produced by the same Creator which gave the being at the first. Creation-work can only be from GOD; and that without any other pre-disposing cause. Reader! mark well the features of character in the new creature! Then see if it be your portion. Moreover, the Apostle saith: *All things are of GOD*. So that the new creature, with all

the properties which define the new-birth, are of divine origin, and come from divine giving. The new nature, the new heart, the new being, the new life, the new light, the new mind, yea, every thing which can be said to constitute newness of character; all are of GOD. Are they new born? Then is it *not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of GOD*, John 1:13; John 3:5-6; John 3:8. Are they renewed in the spirit of the mind? This also is of GOD. Titus 3:4-6. Are they quickened to a new life? JESUS saith: *I am the light, and the life of men*, John 8:12. In short, every thing in the new creation, both on cause, and effect, is of the LORD. *I create the fruit of the lips: peace, peace to him that is far off; and to him that is near, saith the LORD, and I will heal him*. Isaiah 57:19.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:20

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us; we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

The Apostle hath very beautifully introduced this verse, in the midst of those high truths he was delivering to the Church, as if his mind was suddenly constrained to make appeal, from what he had said before, to the Church of GOD, in that place. He takes up the idea of an Ambassador, sent not with an earthly commission, but with an heavenly, to entreat poor sinners to a reconciliation with GOD in CHRIST. And what endears the message still more is, that the overture first comes from the offended party. By the fall, it is our nature that is in a state of enmity and warfare with God. So that, what grace must it be in GOD, not only to provide a remedy, for repairing the dreadful breach of sin, but also to woo the

sinner's heart, to accept the offered mercy. Reader! do not overlook in this view, the provision made, for acceptance, in every instance, of the Church of JESUS, Psalm 110:3; John 6:37.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Volumes might be written, on this most blessed verse of Scripture: and when all the powers of the human mind had been drained, to express every thing the imagination could conceive, of blessedness contained in it, numberless things would be left unsaid, and unwritten; so infinitely full are the blissful contents. That CHRIST, who knew no sin, should be made sin for his people: that he who is holiness itself, and who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; should be counted unholy, and have all the iniquity of his people laid upon him! yea, he that is One with the FATHER, over all GOD blessed for ever, should be made a *curse* for them: what a world of mysteries is contained in this subject? But, Reader! think, and think with holy, rapture, and joy, of the blissful truth connected with it, if CHRIST who knew no sin, was made sin for them; they also which are his people, and who in themselves are all sin, and know no righteousness, are made the righteousness of GOD in him? So that they are really, and truly, considered righteous before GOD in his righteousness, as much as CHRIST stood forth in GOD'S view the sinner's Surety, and was beheld, and reputed sin for them. And this becomes the sole cause, as was all along intended, of the sinner's justification before GOD. Not to procure favor to his people, to any of their labored attempts after righteousness;

but to be the very righteousness of his people. CHRIST is himself their righteousness. And they are accepted as righteous in him. Oh! the unspeakable felicity of thus eyeing CHRIST, and knowing Him, as *the LORD our righteousness*. Sweetly the Apostle speaks of the Church, made righteous in his righteousness, when he saith; *who of GOD is made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*. And as sweetly the Prophet hath taught the Church, under GOD the HOLY GHOST, to take all the comfort, and confidence, of the divine provision, when putting those words in the mouth of the redeemed: *Surely shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come, and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory*, Isaiah 45:24-25. 1 Corinthians 1:30.

Reflections

Who is blessed in the LORD, that can join the Apostle's confidence, on the same well-grounded assurance in CHRIST; that when the tabernacle of this earthly house shall fall, the mansion of glory in JESUS, stands open for his sure reception? Oh! the vast, the conceivable difference, which will take place, at the judgment-seat of CHRIST, between the redeemed of the LORD, and the unregenerate! Who shall form conception, between the shouts of holy joy, and the shrieks of the condemned? LORD JESUS! be thou my portion *now*; and sure I am, thou wilt be my everlasting confidence *then*, LORD! give me all the sweet properties of the new creature, and so cause the love of CHRIST to constrain me, that during the whole time-state of my continuance here below, I may thus judge,

and thus act, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him, who died for them, and rose again! Blessed LORD JESUS! I would be wholly thine! And, oh! the rapturous thought! I am made the righteousness of GOD in thee!

Chapter 6

Contents

In, the former Part of this Chapter, the Apostle is treating the Subject of the Ministry. In the latter, he cautions the Church against communications with infidels.

2 CORINTHIANS 6:1-2

(1) We then, as workers together *with him*, beseech *you* also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (2) (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)

This Chapter opens with an address to the Church, on the kind reception of the services *of Paul*, and his companions in the ministry. He calls them *workers together*; that is, fellow laborers, in the word, and doctrine. But the words *with him*, are not in the original. Some have thought, and properly thought, that they ought not to be there.

The ministers sent by the HOLY GHOST to preach the word, can hardly be called *workers together with Him*. It is too high an honor. Neither is it correct. For although the LORD speaks in his word, and by his word, in the labors of those servants he

sends; yet the word is wholly his, the work his, and the sole glory his. It is always best, in order to hide pride from the eyes, to lay low in the dust before GOD. And *Paul* had too humble an opinion of himself to make use of the phrase in any way of self-importance.

But, leaving the consideration of this part of the subject in this verse, to those of the ministry, whom it more immediately concerns; it will be more suited to the purpose of a *Poor Man's Commentary*, to enquire into the meaning of the Apostle's words, when he saith: *we beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of GOD in vain*. *Paul* could not be supposed, by this expression, to imply the possibility of receiving the graces of GOD the HOLY GHOST, in his Almighty work on the soul, in vain. When GOD the HOLY GHOST regenerates a child of GOD, and quickens the soul which was before dead in trespasses and sins; the spiritual life the LORD the SPIRIT then gives, can never die. This, his sovereign act, is equal to the gift of the FATHER, in choosing, and the grace of the SON, in redeeming; and which brings the child of GOD into a life-being of apprehension, to all the blessings of the Covenant. He is then made *a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*, 2 Peter 1:3-4. He is then *born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of GOD, which liveth and abideth for ever*, 1 Peter 1:23. A child of GOD, therefore, cannot receive this grace of GOD in vain; for it hath no one dependence whatever upon any act of his own. In the new-birth of grace, as much as the birth of nature, the receiver of the mercy hath no agency in the deed. They that are born again, are born, not *of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor*

of the will of man, but of God, John 1:13. But the outward means of grace may be administered, and even GOD's children, from the remains of indwelling corruption, and the powers of *Satan*, and the cares of the world, too often receive them with the ear, while the heart, is for a time, uninterested in them. The Church of old, is described in this state, from a sleepy frame into which she had fallen; and out of which, JESUS roused her. See Song of Solomon 5:2 and the *Poor Mans Commentary* upon it. Reader! it is blessed, when a child of GOD is kept alive by *inward* grace, in the use of *outward* means; that the administration of the word, and ordinances, may never be barren, and unprofitable.

The blessed words which follow, in the former part of them; *for he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee*: these are not *Paul's* words, but GOD the FATHER'S words to his dear SON, as Mediator. In Isaiah's prophesy, Isaiah 49:8, we have them recorded. They form a part, of what GOD the HOLY GHOST hath been pleased to inform the church, concerning the gracious transactions which took place between the Almighty Persons of the GODHEAD, in relation to the Church, before all worlds. The Reader will do well to read the whole Chapter, for it is most blessed. But the words *Paul* quotes in this place, are chosen by him to shew, that during the whole time-state of CHRIST upon earth, JEHOVAH heard him, and succoured him, and accepted him, for his Church and People. This, therefore, might well be called *the accepted time*. In another Scripture, it is called the *acceptable year of the LORD*, Isaiah 61:2 with Luke 4:19. And elsewhere, JESUS by the spirit of prophecy stiles it, *the year of my redeemed*, Isaiah 63:4. And truly it

was an accepted time for the Church in CHRIST, when the Person, blood-shedding, sufferings, obedience, and death, of CHRIST, was accepted, for the everlasting salvation of his People. But the words Which follow, are the words of the Apostle. *Behold! now is the accepted time! Behold, now is the day of salvation!* The Apostle, under GOD the HOLY GHOST, very blessedly makes this conclusion, for the joy, and encouragement of the Church. For as in the day of CHRIST upon earth, this was the day for his accomplishing salvation, and which he most effectually did, by the sacrifice of himself: so now, during the time-state of the Church upon the earth, and the time-state of every individual of the Church, this is the accepted time, and the day of salvation; in which GOD the FATHER'S everlasting love, in the choice of each child of GOD in CHRIST, is proved: an interest, and union, and oneness with CHRIST, as CHRIST, is discovered; and the quickening, regenerating, renewing, and sealing grace of GOD the HOLY GHOST, is felt, and enjoyed; when the LORD by his sovereignty, makes the souls of the redeemed *willing, in the day of his power*. And this *now*, the Apostle speaks of, and dwells upon, is not a limited *now*, as some, to their own souls distresses, and to the distresses of others, have supposed, as if a poor sinner's receiving grace depended upon his receiving it now, which may be refused to him *tomorrow*: which would be making GOD'S grace depend upon man's will; and the Omnipmency of the LORD rest, for accomplishment, upon the sovereign pleasure of man. But the *now* the Apostle speaks of, is a *now*, which to the Church at large, continues, as long as the world shall continue; and to every individual of the Church, as long as that individual shall continue in his present time state. For it must remain, until all the redeemed, for

whom CHRIST died, are brought in. *All that the FATHER giveth me, said JESUS, shall come to me,* John 6:37. And the *accepted time* is not the time of *man's* appointing, but the LORD'S. The now of GOD, is the day, when GOD makes willing, Psalm 110:3. The laborers in the vineyard called at the eleventh hour, never had the *now*, until *that eleventh hour*. The thief on the cross knew nothing of the day of salvation, but in the moment of death. Reader! there is always to the child of GOD *the accepted time*, when GOD'S time comes. And every child of GOD finds, that the blessed now, when the fulness of time is come, and He who first sent forth his SON to redeem, sends forth His Son to redeem, sends forth the SPIRIT of his SON into the hearts of his redeemed, to quicken, whereby they cry *Abba, FATHER!* Galatians 4:6.

2 CORINTHIANS 6:3-10

(3) Giving no offense in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: (4) But in all *things* approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, (5) In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; (6) By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, (7) By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, (8) By honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and *yet* true; (9) As unknown, and *yet* well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; (10) As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and *yet* possessing all things.

What a lovely Portrait the Apostle hath here drawn, of a Minister of JESUS! How totally dissimilar in every feature, from the rank, and opulence, of modern Prelacy? Who should have thought, when *Paul* wrote this Epistle to the Church at *Corinth*, that a time would come, when state and grandeur

would be considered suitable appendages to the Sacred Order! Great part of what the Apostle hath here said, concerning the *all things*, in which he recommends the LORD's servants to approve themselves, as *ministers of GOD*, is done away. How is it possible for such as the present hour furnisheth, to manifest whose servants they are, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, labors, watchings, fastings, and the like. There was a time indeed, even in our own land, when the eminent servants of the LORD were eminent also for suffering. And never did the truths of the Gospel appear to greater advantage than in that period.

There are some of the characters of the ministry, which the Apostle hath sketched in this picture, still to be found. *By honor; and dishonor; by evil report, and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known.* There are some, in every age of the world, which will be found to treat the distinguishing truths of the Gospel with hatred and contempt; and to dishonor the preachers of those truths, with evil report, and reproach. While the highly taught few, whom GOD the HOLY GHOST teacheth, will honor his messengers; and while such faithful men are unknown to the world, yea, not unfrequently unknown to each other; they are well known, by all the Persons of the GODHEAD. GOD the FATHER, hath known them, loved them, chosen them; given them in Covenant to his dear SON, and had his eye upon them, from all eternity, to redeem them by CHRIST, in this time-state of their being, from all the corruptions of the Adam-nature of the fall. GOD the SON hath known them; having loved their persons with an everlasting love, betrothed them to himself before all worlds, and redeemed them in the

time-state from sin, and all the dreadful consequences of sin, by his blood; and takes up their persons and their causes now, since his return to glory; and never ceaseth his affection for them, but sheweth how unalterable his love is, until he hath brought them home to his kingdom of glory, that *where he is, there they shall be also*. GOD the HOLY GHOST hath known them, and loved them with an everlasting love, having knit them to CHRIST, and anointed them with Him, as the members of his body, before all time; and in every individual instance, regenerates, and sanctifies the whole body of CHRIST, as one with him, in all the communicable graces, from the Head to the members. So that, however unknown to men, the whole Church of CHRIST is known of GOD; graciously blessed, preserved, and made everlastingly happy: and however poor in worldly accommodation, yet *rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*; and though seemingly having nothing, yet in reality CHRIST being their Portion, they possess all things. Reader! learn from this portrait of the Apostle's and drawn under GOD the SPIRIT'S direction, to form an estimate of the LORD's ministers: not by outward shew, but by the inward illumination of the heart; and the blessing of GOD on their labors, both in word and doctrine.

2 CORINTHIANS 6:11-18

(11) O *ye* Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. (12) Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. (13) Now for a recompense in the same, I (speak as unto *my* children,) be ye also enlarged. (14) Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? (15) And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? (16) And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in

them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (17) Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you. (18) And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

The Apostle here addresseth the Church. After speaking to the ministers, he now speaks to the people. An enlarged heart of affection to the whole body of CHRIST, could not but shew itself, in suitable terms, of the warmest desires for their welfare. And the whole Chapter, taken into one point of view, forms a very beautiful address, of the great Apostle to the Church at *Corinth*, including both the minister and congregation, of what would form a lovely representation, in their union with CHRIST, and with one another; when under grace, those directions were closely attended to, and followed.

I do not think it needful, to enter into a particular investigation, of the several interesting things, which *Paul* here so affectionately recommends. The words themselves are very plain, and the importance of the measure unanswerably conclusive, and binding. The whole of his arguments are truly Scriptural, and come home; enforced by every motive, which can endear them to the heart. But what I more immediately would beg the Reader to observe from them is what the LORD hath here confirmed, of his indwelling residence in his people. Through all the Old Testament dispensation, GOD the HOLY GHOST taught the Church, to be in the constant expectation of this great, but mysterious event. The promise began very early in the Church, while forming in the wilderness. *I will set my tabernacle among you*, (said the LORD;) *and my soul, shall not abhor you*. As if the conscious

sense of our uncleanness might tempt a child of GOD to call it in question. No! said the LORD. As the foreknowledge, and fore-view the SON of GOD had of his Church's fall, in the Adam-nature, did not prevent Him, as GOD-Man-Mediator, to tabernacle in our flesh; yea, to be made in the likeness of sinful flesh: Romans 8:3. so neither shall the uncleanness of his people, hinder GOD the SPIRIT, from making their bodies his temple. *I will walk among you*, said the LORD; *and will be your GOD, and ye shall be my people*, Leviticus 26:11-12. And the Prophet, in after ages, and coming nearer home to Gospel days, was commissioned to tell the Church the same truth. *I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh; and I will put my SPIRIT within you*, Ezekiel 36:26-27. 1 Corinthians 3:16; Hebrews 3:6.

I pray the Reader to pause over this very sweet Scripture. Nothing can be more plain, from Scripture authority, than that the SON of GOD hath tabernacled in our flesh, John 1:14. And nothing can be more plain, than that, GOD by his SPIRIT promised, and hath fulfilled it, to dwell in his people. *Paul* speaks of this, as so well known, and so certain a truth, that he demands of the Church their conviction of this doctrine, as of a most well-assured, and most cordially believed thing: *Know ye not, (saith he,) that ye are the temple of GOD; and that the SPIRIT of GOD dwelleth in you?* 1 Corinthians 3:16. And JESUS himself; in his farewell discourse with his disciples, within a few verses of each other, speaks of himself, and the FATHER, and the HOLY GHOST, dwelling, and making their abode with his people. *If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my FATHER will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him.* And, speaking of the HOLY GHOST, JESUS said:

he shall abide with you for ever. He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you, John 14:16-17; John 14:23. So that, here are the whole Three Persons of the GODHEAD, positively said, to dwell in the LORD's people. And what I beg the Reader particularly to notice, in this mysterious work of love, and grace, and favor, which distinguisheth the Church of GOD from the Christless world, is this: that notwithstanding, in the great work of regeneration, it is the spiritual part only of every child of GOD that is renewed, and made *a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*, 2 Peter 1:3-4. *yet* the unrenewed part, the body, is said to be *the temple of the HOLY GHOST*. Yea, the whole Persons of the GODHEAD, (as hath been shewn in this paragraph in the Scriptures quoted,) are said *to make their abode* with the LORD's people. So that the body, unrenewed as it is, and, unrenewed as it will remain, until this corruptible shall put on incorruption, is nevertheless, as much as the spirit, the tabernacle of the LORD, Leviticus 26:11. And hence *Paul* calls upon the Church, to glorify GOD in their body, as well as in their spirit, which are His, 1 Corinthians 6:20. Will it be said, this is mysterious! I would answer, in the words of the Apostle; *without* all controversy, *great is the mystery of Godliness!* And, what begins in *Paul's* relation of it, with GOD manifest in the flesh; may be well supposed to be followed, with justified in the SPIRIT, 1 Timothy 3:16. Reader! we are in a world of mystery. But remember, these grand and momentous truths are proposed to the Church, as the objects of faith: not for our faculties to explain. If, *Nicodemus* like, we demand explanation how can these things be? we presume to try them by our standard of apprehension; and instead of

belief, substitute reason. See Ephesians 2:22, and Commentary.

From a presumption like this let me *call* off your attention to what the Apostle so sweetly recommends, and with which he closeth the Chapter. He first gives us the words of GOD in his promise, and then the assurance of GOD in his blessing. *I will dwell in them, and walk in them, saith GOD. Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the LORD, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you, and will be a FATHER unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the LORD Almighty* Reader! these are GOD's assurances. Our province is to believe. What though you and I both know, that it is our spiritual part only that is regenerate, the body is still the subject of sin; yet it is as much the LORD'S, as is the spirit: and in it the LORD dwells, for it is his temple. And, notwithstanding all we feel, and all we groan under, from being daily burdened from the warfare of the lusts which are in our flesh; yet both in body, and in spirit, we are the LORD'S. And GOD declares that he dwells in us, in a special, personal, and intimate manner. Reader! see to it, that those blessed testimonies of the divine inhabitation are in your portion; and then by faith, may the LORD give you, to take to yourself, all that personal interest, and holy joy, it clearly brings.

Reflections

WHAT everlasting praise hath the Church of GOD to offer, to the joint Authors of such unspeakable grace, and favor, as are given to the Church, in JESUS CHRIST! Blessed for ever be GOD the FATHER, who both gave his dear SON, as a Covenant for

the people; and heard him, and succored him, in the day of salvation! And blessed for ever be GOD the SON, who hath given the accepted time, and the day of salvation to his Church, during the whole of her time-state, upon earth. And blessed be GOD the HOLY GHOST, who not only maketh the LORD's people willing in the day of his power; but in the infinite condescension of his grace, maketh their bodies his temple! Oh! LORD the SPIRIT! do thou give me to know, and live under, thy gracious abidings, from day to day. Suffer me not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For as CHRIST hath no concord with *Belial*, so let not my soul have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Oh! for grace to be separated, that I may daily, hourly, be enjoying the astonishing grace, in having the knowledge, and enjoyment of GOD as my FATHER, and live, among the One and daughters of the LORD Almighty!

Chapter 7

Contents

This Chapter contains many earnest Exhortations, arising out of the foregoing. Paul adds several affectionate Observations, as expressive of his Good-will to the Church.

2 CORINTHIANS 7:1

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

This verse seems to be unconnected with what follows, but rather as the inference, from what was said before, in the

preceding Chapter. And, as a right apprehension of the doctrine contained in it, appears to me to be of great moment, I would beg to consider it separately.

The Apostle having laid down the certain truth, that GOD hath condescended to such a wonderful act of grace, as to dwell in his people, and walk in them; and to call himself their GOD, and they his people; *Paul* makes this conclusion, as the result of such unspeakable mercy: that the Church should cleanse herself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of GOD. But what cleansing doth the Apostle mean? Not human cleansing surely. For cleansing-work, as much as creating-work, is the LORD'S. And GOD'S promise is to this amount: *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and, ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols*, Ezekiel 36:25. And the cries of GOD'S children, for the LORD to cleanse them, is a plain proof, they are conscious, they cannot cleanse themselves. But the cleansing themselves, both here, and in various other parts of Scripture, where the child of GOD is called upon to cleansing work, is, to act faith upon GOD'S promises, on this ground, that in a daily, hourly, communion, with GOD in CHRIST, they may, by heart-felt experience, know that *the blood of CHRIST cleanseth from all sin*. 1 John 1:7.

In like manner, they are said to be *perfecting holiness in the fear of GOD*. What holiness? They have no holiness, but what is *in CHRIST*, and *from CHRIST*. He is made of GOD unto them, both *wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption*. 1 Corinthians 1:30. And the Church is expressly, said to be *perfect in CHRIST JESUS*, Colossians 1:28. But the perfecting holiness in the fear of GOD, consists in the lively

actings of faith, upon all GOD'S promises in CHRIST, and which is instanced in this Scripture, in one feature of them, namely, GOD'S fear; when he said: *I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me*, Jeremiah 32:40. So That the Apostle is not calling upon the Church, to cleanse themselves from their filth, which is GOD'S work; neither to perfect holiness in their own attainments, which is GOD'S glory: for he had told the Church of the *Corinthians* in a former Epistle, that *they were washed, and were sanctified, and were justified, in the name of the LORD JESUS and by the SPIRIT of our GOD*, 1 Corinthians 6:11. But he is calling upon them to live by faith on GOD'S promises; and by faith to enjoy their blessings, in seeing themselves in a justified state before GOD, and cleansed from every thing of evil, in the Adam-fall of corruption, by the perfection of holiness which is in CHRIST JESUS.

And I take occasion from this sweet Scripture to observe, how much the comfort and happiness of the Church of GOD, depends upon a right apprehension, under divine teaching, of this grand truth. A regenerated child of GOD is regenerated only in spirit. *It is the SPIRIT which quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing*, John 6:63. The flesh of a child of GOD is neither quickened nor renewed. Its whole nature is carnal, sensual, and earthly-minded. And hence, the renewed souls of GOD'S children from the opposition their sinful bodies are continually making, to their spiritual desires; groan from day to day. To look therefore for holiness, from an unholy body, is as absurd, as to expect an act of life from the dead. But to perfect holiness in the fear of GOD, by the soul's daily, hourly, act of faith, upon GOD'S promises, that he will cleanse us, and

we shall be clean; and that the LORD will, by his blessed SPIRIT, *mortify the deeds of the body that we may live*: Romans 8:13, this is scriptural, and the true life of faith. And the promises are to this amount: that the LORD will keep him *in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on him*. For all that are kept, *are kept by the power of GOD through faith unto salvation*, Isaiah 26:3; 1 Peter 1:5.

2 CORINTHIANS 7:2-11

(2) Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man. (3) I speak not *this* to condemn *you*: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with *you*. (4) Great *is* my boldness of speech toward you, great *is* my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation. (5) For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without *were* fightings, within *were* fears. (6) Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; (7) And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more. (8) For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though *it were* but for a season. (9) Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. (10) For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. (11) For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge! In all *things* ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

I see no reason to detain the Reader with any particular observations on these verses: at least in that part, of what

the Apostle saith, with respect to the special state of the *Corinthian* Church, at the time he wrote to it. The trouble *Paul* felt, from some particular exercises he had, on their account, gave occasion for him to observe, the sweetness of divine comforts, which are administered by the LORD, as those exercises his people required. And I believe the Reader will find that in all the afflictions of the faithful, strength is suited to the day. Supposing a child of GOD be brought into soul, or body sorrow: and supposing the distress he ever so great, or in duration ever so long; yet, in exact proportion to what the state needs, JESUS gives the suited supply. It is very blessed to eye the LORD'S hand in every appointment. And it is very blessed to discover the LORD'S presence in the sorrow. A faithful soul, through grace, will find a strength imparted by such a contemplation, as will bear him up under the heaviest pressure, until the storm be past. And while a child of GOD can, and doth, wait the issue of things, with that *patience* which the LORD alone gives, and which JESUS bids his disciples *to possess their souls*; Luke 21:19, there will be an assured end, of holy triumph in CHRIST. It is a precious thing to have faith to give credit to GOD. Wherever this is found, GOD will crown that faith with success.

I detain the Reader to notice what the Apostle saith of *godly sorrow*, distinguished from *the sorrow of the world*, which worketh death. The sources, from whence they spring, being as opposite, as light and darkness: so must be their consequences. Godly sorrows comes from grace, in the ascension gifts of CHRIST. Worldly sorrow wholly from the world. The former, which comes from GOD, leads to GOD. The latter, ariseth from the world, and with the world perisheth for

ever. LORD JESUS! send down those immense blessings on thy Church and people, which as a Prince, and SAVIOR, thou art exalted to give: and these will bring with them repentance to thy true Israel, and remission of sins., Acts 5:31. Zechariah 12:10.

2 CORINTHIANS 7:12-16

(12) Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, *I did it* not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you. (13) Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all. (14) For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which *I made* before Titus, is found a truth. (15) And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him. (16) I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all *things*.

There would have needed no occasion to have offered any observation on these verses, as they had a particular relation to the Church at *Corinth*; the personal circumstances *Paul* referred to, would have rendered it unnecessary, had that been all. But there are some things here noticed, which have a general tendency to benefit the whole Church of CHRIST; and as such, should not be passed by. It is always profitable to believers, to mark in their own persons, the blessed operations of grace. When GOD pours out a spirit of grace and supplication, upon any of his people; it is refreshing to the soul, to mark their gracious properties, and effects. And when the eye of the soul, is thereby directed to CHRIST, until the heart is suitably affected with the melting contemplation, the promise of GOD is confirmed and assured. We then prove the truth of Scripture, and we are GOD'S witnesses in point.

Neither is this all. For as these things relate to ourselves, we discover the divine love by the effect. Ordinances, means of grace, public worship, closet exercises; all, and every one of these, are unprofitable, until the SPIRIT comes to give them life and energy, as *Paul saith*, behold this self-same thing, how graciously the LORD hath wrought when are induced those blessed effects: godly sorrow for sin: carefulness to avoid sin: indignation against the authors of sin; the world, the enemy of souls, and our corrupt hearts: yea, an holy, jealous fear, which the LORD puts into the heart to keep his people from sin, in departing from him: a zeal for his glory, and a revenge against all that would oppose that glory. These sweet and gracious effects, spring from the first great cause; and prove, that the repentance is GOD'S gift, not man's setting up: and as it comes from GOD; so it leads the soul to GOD; who alone can, and doth say, fear not, I am thy salvation. I hope the Reader, through grace, will discover in both views the LORD'S mercy, and man's advantage; and learn to whom is to be given, all the glory.

Reflections

How very encouraging it is to the true believer in CHRIST, to behold where his security is, and in whom is his strength found! LORD! thou knowest, and thou hast in some measure taught me to know, that I can do nothing of myself, and all my sufficiency is of thee. I bless thee, my gracious GOD, that I have these sweet promises of thy indwelling abode, in my heart. Keep me therefore, by thy Almighty power; and by faith, give me daily, hourly, to see, and know, that thou art cleansing me, and I am cleansed: thou hast perfected

holiness, yea, thou art thyself the holiness of thy people; and, by faith, I am made the blessed partaker of it, in the fear of GOD.

And, oh! thou risen and exalted SAVIOR! send down thine ascension gifts in holy profusion, upon Churches, ministers, and people. Sweet will it be to my soul, and to every child of GOD, to receive from thine own hand, the genuine grace, which worketh godly sorrow, in a true, and sincere repentance, not to be repented of. LORD keep open this spring in our souls. Divorce us from all self-righteousness. Let every thing tend to hide pride from our eyes; and open the LORD JESUS to our view. And let a daily sense of our nothingness, and creatureship, and unworthiness, endear our LORD, more and more to our apprehension; that we may behold JESUS, and JESUS alone, as the whole of salvation. Not tears, not prayers, not repentance, no, nor faith, as an act of ours. These are *effects*, not the *cause*. Neither any thing wrought *by* us, or any thing wrought *in* us; but CHRIST himself; and his own Personal, incommunicable work, the whole of salvation! Oh! for grace, daily, hourly to know, and as often to sing; the words of him of old: *The LORD is my strengths and my song, and he is become my salvation!*

Chapter 8

Contents

The Historical Part of this Chapter, is in relation to the Provision Paul recommended, for the poor Saints in the

Church. He speaks sweetly of CHRIST, and shews the Fulness, and Suitability of the LORD, to his People.

2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-9

(1) Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; (2) How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. (3) For to *their* power, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their* power *they were* willing of themselves; (4) Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. (5) And *this they did*, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. (6) Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. (7) Therefore, as ye abound in every *thing, in* faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and *in* all diligence, and *in* your love to us, *see* that ye abound in this grace also. (8) I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. (9) For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

The Apostle opens the Chapter with a very high commendation of the liberality of the Churches of *Macedon*, which is *Philippi*. And to be sure, what he saith of those people, gives one a very delightful idea, how truly the grace of JESUS must have wrought upon their minds. But *Paul* shows the foundation of all that love, and zeal, when tracing it to the source: they first had given themselves to the LORD, and therefore, they might well give of their substance, or even if needful, the whole of their substance, to the LORD's poor family. I do entreat the Reader to attend to this, for it is in my view most interesting. Neither do I find in the whole Bible, any thing which throws a clearer light, on what may be called the true spirit of the Gospel. If GOD the HOLY GHOST, when

regenerating my fallen nature, opened to my spiritual apprehension, a full sense, of the nothingness of every thing *out* of CHRIST; and of the fulness, and all-sufficiency, *in* CHRIST; so as to make me out of love with all but JESUS; and JESUS, and his people, became all that was dear to me: what is there, after such views, that a child of GOD could count dear, or withhold from CHRIST; in his distressed members?

I cannot do a single act, either of praise, or of service, to shew my attachment to CHRIST. My praise, cannot add to his glory, no more than my tears could swell his sea. And the services of men, or angels, do not benefit GOD. So that CHRIST in his Person, is beyond the reach of all receiving. But CHRIST in his poor members, is capable of receiving, even the cup of cold water; and hath declared, that the act, when done with an eye to Him, is costly in his view. But it should seem, that notwithstanding every one who reads his Bible knows this, and believes it; yet perhaps no man, from the beginning of the world to this hour, ever did, fully, and upon every occasion, act up to it. At least, I plead guilty for myself; I have not. And I would go on pilgrimage many a mile, to see the follower of JESUS who hath; and who in every circumstance of life, hath been invariably acting up to this principle!

But, when the Reader hath carried this doctrine to the highest extent the imagination can conceive; and pictured to his view some beautiful representation of a child of GOD, beholding CHRIST in every one of his members, and acting up to that view, in taking part in all their distresses; let him call off his attention, to what the Apostle hath here said, of JESUS himself; and lose all recollection of tenderness, and

compassion, in the members of CHRIST to one another, in contemplating the SON of GOD, as *Paul* hath represented him. Ye know (saith he) *the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor; that ye, through his poverty, might be rich.* Reader! pause over the wonderful account! We were before considering, the greatness of that man's mind, that in the consciousness of the love of CHRIST, and an interest in CHRIST, could give of his substance to any extent, to the relief of any of CHRIST'S family; and take no account of his possessions, from an attention to CHRIST and his people. But when we look at JESUS, who though LORD of all, became servant of all: who though LORD of heaven and earth, and rich beyond all calculation of riches, yet made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant; and became poor, that his redeemed, through his poverty, might be made rich: this is a precedent unheard of, an example unparalleled; and which leaves at an infinite distance, all that can be mentioned of liberality, in the whole creation of Genesis and can be said of none but Him, who is One with the FATHER over all GOD blessed for evermore. Amen!

Reader! do not hastily pass away from the wonderful subject. Think of the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. He was rich. Yes! so rich, that as GOD, all divine perfections were his, in common with the FATHER, and the HOLY GHOST. And, as GOD-Man, in him dwelt all the fulness of the GODHEAD bodily. All government His, in his Universal Empire and Dominion; through all the departments of nature, providence, grace, and glory. *All things were made by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.* All these were,

and are, His by right, by possession, essentially and truly his own, underived, eternal, and unchangeable. Now behold his vast humiliation. Though he was thus rich, beyond the utmost imagination of riches; yet, for our sakes, he became poor. So poor, *that he had not where to lay his head*. He was despised and rejected of men, a man or the man of sorrows; as if, and which was in reality the case, no sorrow, nor all the sorrows of the human state, could be brought into comparison with his, Lamentations 1:12.

And all this, that his people through *his poverty might be made rich*. And, what tends to enhance the mercy still more, is the persons for whom this love of CHRIST was thus shewn. Not angels, nor holy men, but sinners, and those of the deepest dye; yea, enemies of GOD, by wicked works, who had done no one thing to merit divine favor; but done every thing to merit divine displeasure. *Herein is love, not that we loved GOD, but that he loved us!* Reader! do you know this grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST? Many read of it. Many talk of it. But *Paul* tells the Church of the *Corinthians*, that they knew it: that is, GOD the HOLY GHOST had taught them to know it, in the blessed effect of it upon their souls, by regeneration: by which they knew the truth of it: and their interest in it. For having been once desperately poor, and ruined by sin; they knew themselves now immensely rich, in CHRIST, both my Reader know it, and from the self-same cause?

2 CORINTHIANS 8:10-15

And herein I give *my* advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. (11) Now therefore perform the doing *of it*; that as *there was* a readiness to will, so *there may be* a performance also out of that which ye have. (12) For if there be first a willing mind, *it is*

accepted according to that a man hath, *and* not according to that he hath not. (13) For *I mean* not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: (14) But by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may be a supply* for their want, that their abundance also may be *a supply* for your want: that there may be equality: (15) As it is written, He that *had gathered* much had nothing over; and he that *had gathered* little had no lack.

I pass over every thing in these verses of a personal nature, either as referring to the *Corinthians*, to whom *Paul* was writing, or of himself, or of any other, to attend to a sweet view, which is given, us in one of these verses, respecting the Church of GOD in the Wilderness; and indeed the Church of GOD in the present hour, both as it concerns GOD's providences, and GOD's grace.

The Apostle, in recommending an equality of contribution to the poor saints, according to their respective ability, refers to a well known fact in the Church's history, which was little short of a daily miracle, in the *Israelite's* food. The LORD rained down upon them *manna* from Heaven: and which they were commanded to gather, new and pure every morning, the LORD's day excepted: But such was the wonderful ordination of a wonder-working GOD, that when each man came to measure, what he had gathered, and to mete it with an omer, he that gathered much, had nothing over, and, he that gathered little, had no lack, Exodus 16:18. Now this was in the very nature of things, a matter impossible; had not the hand of the LORD been in it. But hence arose several weighty instructions.

First: it preached CHRIST in his *providence*. It is blessed to behold our LORD as the glorious Head of all things, in a way of

dominion; while we more especially contemplate him in a more dear, and intimate manner, as the head of *union* to his body the Church. He is indeed the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him *that filleth all in all*, Ephesians 1:22-23. Now, it is the LORD JESUS which orders, regulates, appoints, and provides, for all his creation. To speak in the language of his own most holy word: *he openeth his hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness*, Psalm 145:16. And hence in the camp of *Israel*, all *Israel* as a nation, as well as the *Israel* of GOD yea; all the mixed multitude which went up with *Israel* from *Egypt*, were supplied in this common providence, with the bread that perished, Exodus 12:37-38. So now in like manner, there is a common providence in the dispensation of the bread of life, where all gather in common, in the mixed multitude which attend the word. Our LORD'S parable of the Sower is in proof. See Matthew 13:23 and Commentary.

Secondly. It preached CHRIST'S *wisdom*, in the equality of his *providence*. Nothing could be more in proof of the divine wisdom, that there should be no waste, in this apparently promiscuous, distribution of the *manna*, in the camp of *Israel*, than that, when all had gathered, and came to measure, he that gathered much, had nothing over; and he that gathered little had no lack. So that in fact there was neither want, nor superfluity. A thing impossible, speaking after the manner of men, but for a divine superintendence. And hereby the LORD taught also a sweet lesson, even to the carnal part of *Israel*, as well as to his spiritual *Israel*, both then, and now; namely, what a folly is it for a man to gather more than his wants require, which when those wants are answered, leave him

literally nothing that he can either want, or use. He is like the rich fool in the Gospel, having more goods than he can consume, or that he knows what to do with; and yet not rich towards God. See Luke 12:21 and Commentary.

Thirdly. By the portion of the *manna* which some of the *Israelites* left until the morning, and which bred worms, and stank; beside thereby the Lord's honoring his Sabbath, which the manna laid up for that day, in remaining sweet and pure, became a proof of it; the Lord taught the awfulness of that conduct, which by leaving of their substance to their heirs and descendants, breed sorrow, disappointment, vexation, and trouble. Oh! who shall calculate the root of bitterness, which accumulated treasure, descending from father to son, hath planted, and brought forth its deadly fruit, in many generations. Solomon hath drawn a striking, but melancholy portrait or such characters as these: Ecclesiastes 5:13-17.

But, *fourthly*, and above all by the Apostle's beautiful comment its this place of *Israel's* history of the *Manna*, gathered by them in the Wilderness; we are taught, a sweet spiritual lesson, of CHRIST it his *grace*. That CHRIST, the bread of life, was represented by the *Manna*, is too plain to need observation. But the gathering of it every morning, is not so discernible, as referring to CHRIST, but by his people. As *Israel* was never at a loss, morning by morning, for his *manna*: so neither are GOD'S Israel now of CHRIST. And as he that made the largest gathering in the camp of *Israel*, found no more than he needed, when meted out to him by the *omer*: so the soul that gathers most largely of CHRIST, hath nothing to spare when his wants of JESUS are measured out to him; but he finds a grace to help in every time of need. And, in like

manner, the least gatherer hath enough for his want; for the smallest portion of CHRIST exceeds all the desires of nature. Oh! how precious, to have a CHRIST to live upon, in time, and to all eternity!

2 CORINTHIANS 8:16-24

(16) But thanks *be* to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. (17) For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. (18) And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise *is* in the gospel throughout all the churches; (19) And not *that* only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and *declaration of your ready mind*: (20) Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: (21) Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. (22) And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which *I have* in you. (23) Whether *any do inquire* of Titus, *he is* my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren *be inquired of*, *they are* the messengers of the churches, *and* the glory of Christ. (24) Wherefore show ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

I would here again pass by all lesser considerations, in the several subjects suggested to the Church in these verses, to attend to one, which, according to my view, is of the highest nature, and meriting the closest regard of all the lovers of our LORD JESUS. The subject to which I refer, is opened to us in that passage, where the Apostle gives an answer to any question which might be demanded, concerning his brethren, which were the messengers of the Churches. Tell them, (saith Paul) that *they are the glory of CHRIST*.

There is an uncommon degree of blessedness, in this statement of the Apostle, concerning JESUS. And I pray the Reader's indulgence for the moment, to dwell upon it. It were easy, comparatively speaking, to conceive, how CHRIST is the glory of his people *Israel* for in every sense of the word, and in every way, CHRIST is the all in all to his spouse the Church. Hence, the Prophet was taught by the HOLY GHOST, to tell the Church as much, when he called him, *thy GOD, thy glory!* Isaiah 60:19. Precious LORD JESUS! thou art indeed our GOD, our glory, our *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*. And thou art, and must be so, and all this, and if possible infinitely more; that *he that glorieth, may glory in the LORD*, 1 Corinthians 1:30. But say, thou dear LORD, how is it possible, by any way, or by any means, thy Church, in all the millions of thy people, can bring glory to thee? Surely LORD, thine *Essential* glory, as GOD, in all the divine attributes and perfections, which thou eternally possessest, in common with the FATHER, and the HOLY GHOST, can derive no additional glory from, or by, any of thy creatures. Neither can thy *Personal* glory as GOD-man, independent of thy Church and people, be made more glorious than it is, in its own stature, by all the praises of thy intelligent creation. Neither can the accomplishment of thy office-work as GOD-Man-Mediator, which hath been wrought wholly by thyself, (*for of all the people there was none with thee*, Isaiah 63:3.) be increased in glory, by all the Hallelujah's of thy redeemed, Will our dear LORD say then, how CHRIST, as CHRIST, is rendered glorious by his people; and in what sense it is to be understood, that the Churches are the glory of CHRIST?

Thy people do glorify thee, O LORD, Or it is her desire to glorify thee, by proclaiming thy love, thy grace, thy favor; in telling of thy salvation, from day to day; yea, in spewing forth thy praises, for that thou hast betrothed thy Church to thyself, before all worlds;

redeemed her from her shameful fall, during the present time-state of her being; and in bringing her out of darkness, and the shadow of death, and breaking her bands asunder. These blessings thy people both in heaven and earth, must unceasingly proclaim, if these can tend to glorify the LORD JESUS: for the very stones of the earth might cry out, if they were silent; since JESUS, the SON of GOD, hath magnified the riches of his love towards his Church from everlasting, and caused his grace to shine on poor worms of the earth, whom he hath taken into union with himself, and made them *Kings, and Priests, unto GOD, and the FATHER*, But can these proclamations of praise, though from millions of redeemed beings, bring honor to CHRIST? Can the Church of CHRIST, on this account, be said to be CHRIST'S glory, who hath eternal glory, which can neither receive increase, nor decrease, with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST inhabiting eternity: and who is One with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST; the King eternal, immortal, invisible; the only wise GOD?

But if we cannot (as indeed we cannot) add to our Redeemer's; glory, by our *active* praises; can it be said, that the Church of CHRIST is CHRIST'S glory, when we *passively* receive from him, and our wants afford occasion for his giving out of his fulness, and grace for grace? Is it in this sense *Paul* meant to tell the Church, they were CHRIST'S glory? It is indeed said in Scripture, that *he shall see the travail of his*

soul, and shall be satisfied, Isaiah 63:11. And it must be the satisfaction for the soul-travail of CHRIST, when redeemed receive everlasting life from him. When the LORD beholds his members regenerated from the Adam-nature of the fall, their sins pardoned, their persons justified in his blood, their nature sanctified, and made holy in his righteousness; and they themselves, brought into all the blessings of fellowship with the FATHER, SON, and SPIRIT, through his personal labors, sufferings, and death. These, which are the fruits of his redemption-work, must be as scripture hath stated it, to the satisfaction of JESUS when accomplished. But are these things, which are so precious to the members, precious to the Head also? And is it in this sense, we are to understand the expression of the Apostle, when he said, if our brethren be enquired of, *they are the glory of CHRIST!*

Precious LORD JESUS! (I would say for myself and Reader) Nay sure it is, that thy glory, as SON of GOD, in thine own eternal power and GODHEAD, cannot receive increase, neither suffer diminution. For thy nature, and essence, being infinite, and unchangeable; so must be thy glory. To this, nothing can be added, or taken from. But if the SON of GOD, in his infinite condescension, hath taken into union with himself his Church; (as that he hath to the praise of his grace and our joy most mercifully done,) may we not hope, that the felicity of the members, is the glory of the Head? And, though in thy Person, there is such an infinite fulness, as can receive no increase; (*for in thee dwelleth all the fullness of the GODHEAD bodily*: Colossians 2:9), yet in thine headship, and office-character, our LORD may he glorified, whenever his members are made happy, from his communications! Is it then in this

sense the Apostle spake, when he said, the Church is the glory of CHRIST? And did the Prophet mean the same, when he said: *Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end?* Isaiah 9:7. Reader! if it be so, think what a strength it gives our faith, to look up to all the Persons of the GODHEAD, for all the promised blessings of the Covenant: in that the child of GOD, is not only made happy in receiving all grace from CHRIST; but CHRIST is made glorious, in giving out all blessings to his people. And while the members of CHRIST'S mystical body, derive every thing of blessedness from him, their glorious Head; JESUS receives honor from them in all his relative offices and characters. If our brethren (saith Paul) be enquired of, say, they are the messengers of the Churches, and the glory of CHRIST.

Reflections

WHAT a lovely view those Churches of *Macedon* exhibit, of the real love of CHRIST, in their hearts, in their liberal attention to the wants of CHRIST'S members. Not only in proportion to their power, but beyond their power, the Apostle testifieth, of their willingness to help them. But Reader! while paying all due respect to those faithful members of CHRIST'S body; look beyond all and every other consideration of charity, to contemplate that unequalled grace of JESUS, who throws back at an infinite distance, all comparison.

Blessed LORD! in the sweet view of the Israelites, gathering day by day of their perishing food; let my soul learn, how to gather every day, and all the day, of that bread, which endureth to everlasting life. Precious JESUS! he that gathers the least of thee, hath that which empires cannot purchase.

LORD! give me largely of thy fulness; and even in the smallest portion, I shall have no lack.

Praises to thy great name, O LORD! for the sweet discovery thy servant hath here made, of thine inheritance in thy Church. While thou art all the glory of thy people, they are thy glory in giving out of thy fulness. And while they are made everlastingly blessed, and happy in thee, thou art everlastingly glorified in their salvation. Now do I see a beauty in that Scripture, which GOD the HOLY GHOST makes blessed to my view. *Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD; and a royal diadem in the hand of thy GOD.* Amen,

Chapter 9

Contents

This Chapter is not unsimilar to the former. It treats principally of Alms-giving. But Paul sweetly closeth it, in blessing GOD, for the first, and best, and comprehensive Mercy of all Alms-giving, in GOD's unspeakable Gift, in, and by, CHRIST.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:1-5

(1) For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: (2) For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many. (3) Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: (4) Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting. (5) Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and

make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as *a matter of* bounty, and not as *of* covetousness.

Paul useth the best of all arguments, to recommend every species of charity, both in this, and all his Epistles; namely, the relationship between CHRIST and his people. And very certain it is, that where the love of CHRIST is shed abroad in the heart, the streams of it will diffuse itself to all his members. And indeed, the charity, or love, which doth not begin in this source, hath no security for any continuance. And, even in the time that it flows, as it riseth only *in* creature affection, it is the subject only of what is fickle, and momentary; and either soon dries up of itself, or is stopped by caprice, or the changeableness of the human mind. It is only that love which begins *in* GOD, which is kept alive in communications *from* GOD; and being chiefly directed to his glory, hath a spring to depend upon for its continuance towards GOD'S people for ever!

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-14

(6) But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. (7) Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. (8) And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work: (9) (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth forever. (10) Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) (11) Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. (12) For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

(13) While by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men*; (14) And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

I should not have detained the Reader over those verses, but to remark to him, what the Apostle here saith of GOD's grace! *He is able to make all grace abound.* A sweet thought, everlastingly to be kept in remembrance. All grace, and every sort and kind of grace. So that whatever grace a child of God wants, through all the time-state of his continuance here below, while grace is needful; and until it becomes no longer necessary in being swallowed up in glory: GOD *is able to make abound.* And what tends to endear it still more is the assurance, that He who is able to make all grace abound, hath engaged in Covenant faithfulness, to do so. *My God* (saith Paul) *shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by CHRIST JESUS, Philippians 4:19.* Reader! pause over this sweet account. Let a child of GOD, conscious of his adoption-character, feel his wants ever so great, or many; let his exercises be what they may; temptations from without, fears within, and every thing around, dark, and discouraging: this one assurance removes all. If a Covenant GOD can supply all our need, and make all grace abound; what shall arise to counteract such a resource? His grace must exceed all our wants; and his ability infinitely outstretch all our necessities. So that here is enough to rest upon, and to rely in, for every emergency. Oh! for grace then, from the GOD of all grace, to believe, and trust GOD, for every occasion. Our need affords occasion for his supply. And his power and disposition to help, outruns, and exceeds all our wants. What a multitude of

promises we have to this one point, Isaiah 43:1 &c; Luke 12:27-32; Isaiah 25:4.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:15

(15) Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift.

I have judged it proper to consider this verse alone, and unconnected with every other, from the very great sweetness, and importance of it. For, in whatever point of view the Apostle meant it, the beauty and loveliness is the same. It is probable, that he intended it by way of enforcing, upon higher principles than he had before mentioned, the charity he was recommending to the *Corinthian* Church. And to be sure, it doth form the highest, and the best of all arguments; the unequalled, and unspeakable love of GOD, in the gift of his dear SON. For who that properly considers, the free, unmerited, unlooked for, gift of CHRIST, in all his suitableness, seasonableness, and preciousness, and, lives in the enjoyment of CHRIST, and his fulness, and all-sufficiency; could pause a moment, from flying to the relief of all CHRIST'S distressed members, wherever he heard of them, or met them?

But after paying all due respect on this ground, to the words of the Apostle, I would beg to consider them, on a point of infinitely higher moment. In what sense soever is meant this unspeakable gift: whether CHRIST, or the HOLY GHOST, in either, or in both, the doctrine is most blessed. Some have conceived that by the unspeakable gift, CHRIST is understood: and some have thought that it is the HOLY SPIRIT which is meant.

If we suppose CHRIST, as CHRIST, and as the gift of GOD every sense the mercy is so great, that it may well be called unspeakable. For the infinite dignity of his Person, and the infinite cause for which he is given; all the vast concerns involved in this gift, first before the world was formed, then during the whole of the present time-state of the Church; and, lastly, the eternal world which follows, and in which, all those immense purposes, for which CHRIST was given to the Church, and the Church to CHRIST, are to be accomplished: in whatever way the subject he considered, every child of GOD, in contemplating CHRIST, finds reason to join the Apostle, and cry out: *now thanks be unto GOD for his unspeakable gift.*

And there is another view, which tends to enhance this gift, and render it unspeakably more dear and precious: I mean, in that it was given freely, without any one motive, moving the infinite mind of JEHOVAH to be thus gracious, but his own sovereign will, and from his own everlasting love. So, far were the highly objects of this unspeakable mercy from seeking it, or even from knowing that they needed it, that they were altogether ignorant, both of the Gift, and the Giver. And therefore, in the contemplation of GOD the FATHER'S love, in such unequalled proofs of it, as the free, full, and never to be recalled gift of his dear SON, with all the glorious purposes contained in it; every motive compels them to be unceasingly engaged, in praising GOD for his *unspeakable gift.*

And if GOD, the HOLY GHOST in his office-character be supposed as implied in this unspeakable mercy; there is no less reason for admiring, adoring, and giving praise to GOD, for such a token of divine love.

When I speak of GOD the HOLY GHOST as the gift of GOD, I beg to be clearly understood, as speaking upon Scriptural grounds, and by Scriptural authority. There is a gift of his Person, and a gift of his graces, in his office-character in the Covenant of grace. But this must never be understood, as lessening in our view the infinite glories of the Person of the HOLY GHOST, in his own eternal power, and GODHEAD. In the essential glories of the GODHEAD, all the Persons are equal, in every point, which can distinguish the divine nature. Distinguished only by their personalities, they are One, in essence, will, power, and in all the sovereignty which constitutes GODHEAD. They are the Three which bear record in Heaven; and which three are One. Such is the unity of the divine nature, 1 John 5:7; Deuteronomy 4.

And in relation to the account given to the Church in Scripture, concerning them; they are equally proposed to us in all the revelations of the sacred word, as entitled to the joint love, adoration, obedience, and praise, of all their creatures. Hence, they have in Covenant engagements, entered into certain offices, by which they are pleased to be made known to the Church, in the accomplishment of those grand purposes, from all eternity designed. GOD the FATHER'S office-character is represented, as choosing the Church in CHRIST, giving the Church to CHRIST, accepting the Church in CHRIST, and everlastingly blessing the Church in CHRIST, with all suited blessings, of grace here, and glory to all eternity. Hence in this office-character, CHRIST is said to be *sent* of the FATHER, to be the SAVIOR of the world; 1 John 4:14. And in like manner, the HOLY GHOST is said to be the gift of GOD the FATHER, in, and through, CHRIST, Hence JESUS, when speaking

to his disciples on the coming of the HOLY GHOST, said: *the Comforter, which is the HOLY GHOST, whom the FATHER will send in my name*, John 14:26. And in the same discourse, the LORD JESUS speaks of the HOLY GHOST being sent to them by himself. *It is expedient for you, (said JESUS) that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you*, John 16:7. But in both instances it is plain, from the dignity of GOD the HOLY Ones; in his own Person, eternal nature and GODHEAD, which he possesseth in common with the FATHER and the SON; that these things refer to the office-character, which in the Covenant of grace, GOD the HOLY GHOST hath entered into, and engaged for: and not as if implying any inferiority, in his Almighty Person, and GODHEAD.

If in this sense, the Apostle meant the HOLY GHOST, as the unspeakable gift of GOD; the LORD the SPIRIT is indeed unspeakably precious, in all that relates to his office-character and relation. And the Reader as well as the Writer, of this *Poor Man's Commentary*, if so be he hath partaken in His manifold gifts, and graces; may well join *Paul* in the same short, but expressive hymn of praise, and say *Thanks be unto GOD for his Unspeakable gift!*

Reflections

IT will be a blessed improvement from this Chapter, Under the LORD's teaching, to learn, while *Paul* is speaking of alms-deeds, and liberality to the poor; how pure that source of real charity is, which runs *from* GOD, and leads *to* GOD. What an astonishment would it induce in the minds of some men, if they were told, that as no alms-giving whatever is real

charity, unless it ariseth, as a stream doth from a fountain, from the love of GOD; the numberless public charities as they are called, which have not this origin for their birth, cease to be real charities; and will be found more the effect of pride, and ostentation, than either intended for divine glory, or human happiness. If all the actions of men on the score of charity, were ascertained by this standard, what a draw-back would be found, in the calculations of self-righteous Pharisees, of their real state before GOD? Reader! do attend to the Apostle's character of the love of the heart, in that which comes from GOD, and leads to GOD. GOD loveth a cheerful giver. Not simply self-delight, in the deed; for this is often the choicest fruit the self-righteous character gathers, from his charity, in the offering made to the shrine of his vanity: but a cheerful giver to the LORD, of his own bounty, as the LORD's Almoner. Cheerful in seeing the LORD's poor, fed from the LORD's gifts; in which self hath no gratification of pride, but feels humility. Here it is, the cup of cold water becomes a precious gift. And the hundreds of the affluent, given without it, hath no value in the sight of GOD.

But, Reader! if things be so, think what a gift was, and is, that which flowed, and will for ever be flowing, from the free, pure, disinterested love of GOD, in the gift of his dear SON? Think, what a sovereign, unlooked-for, boundless, bottomless mercy, in the gift of GOD the SPIRIT! Oh! for grace to have a right apprehension, of this *unspeakable gift!*

Chapter 10

Contents

The Apostle enters upon this Chapter with one of the most endearing Expressions of Entreaty, to enforce what he wrote to them, in holding forth the Meekness, and Gentleness, of CHRIST. And he follows it up, with several very interesting Arguments.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-2

(1) Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence *am* base among you, but being absent *am* bold toward you: (2) But I beseech *you*, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

It should seem, by what the Apostle here saith, in the opening of this Chapter, and by several circumstances, in what follows in the body of it, that some had spoken slightly, both of his person, and ministry; and had endeavored to lessen the reputation of his doctrine, and to render him contemptible. It is truly worthy the Reader's observation, that though *Paul* felt the unkindness of it as a man, he wished to pass it by, as a CHRISTIAN, and a minister. Yea, he endeavored to turn it to some advantage, in passing away from the consideration of himself, to the cause of his Master. And, in a most interesting, and affectionate manner, he entreats them, on the best of all possible motives, the meekness, and gentleness of CHRIST, that they would attend to those grand, and most momentous truths, he had been bringing before them. Reader! pause over the unanswerable argument: *the meekness and gentleness of CHRIST*. Contemplate the Person, grace, loveliness, of the Redeemer! When he was upon earth, he fulfilled the prediction GOD the FATHER had given of him, in the most minute point: so that

had any one taken *Isaiah's* prophecy in his hand, and read that part, which referred to the LORD JESUS, as the Redeemer passed by; his mind would have been instantly struck, with the Prophet's picture, compared to the original. *I shall not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the Streets: the bruised reed he shall not break, nor quench the smoking flax.* Compare Isaiah 42:2-3 with Matthew 12:19-20. And, as these were the great features of his character, when in our nature the SON of GOD appeared on earth: so the HOLY GHOST, in glorifying CHRIST, manifests in every heart of the redeemed, that *the fruits of the SPIRIT, is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,* Galatians 5:22. It is very blessed to be enabled by the SPIRIT, to behold CHRIST, and by his sweet influences, to have the SPIRIT of CHRIST in our hearts, Romans 8:9.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:3

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

The Scriptures of GOD do not unfrequently make use of similitudes, to represent divine things by. And among the many, the figure of a Warrior, is often referred to, by way of illustration. And it is very striking. For the whole life of a child of GOD, from the moment of regeneration, until grace is finished in glory, is nothing but one continued warfare. And the holy warrior is never unclad of his spiritual armour, until he is undressed at death.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:4-6

(4) (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;) (5) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every

thought to the obedience of Christ; (6) And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

The Apostle hath inclosed what he saith of the weapons of his warfare, within a parenthesis. But evidently not with an intention, that the Church might read them, or not; for they are very highly expressive of the CHRISTIAN character. And those weapons, are too mighty, and too much needed, by every regenerated child of GOD, to be overlooked, or forgotten, in this day of conflict. Reader! look at a few of them only, and judge for yourself. They are, the Scriptures of GOD, the sword of the SPIRIT, and the promises of the covenant; yea, all those gifts, and strengthenings, and communications, from CHRIST, as an head to his body the Church. And, also the graces of the HOLY GHOST. *Paul* hath more largely dwelt upon them, in his Epistle to the Church at Ephesus (Ephesians 6:10 &c), which I refer. But here it is very, blessed to observe, with what firmness the Apostle rests upon them, as not carnal, but perfectly distinguished from them; and being sure of success in the mighty hand of GOD, for throwing to the ground, all the strong holds of sin, and Satan; and bringing every thing under subjection, in, and to, CHRIST.

Reader! while reviewing the holy armory, let us not lose sight of the great Captain of our salvation. It is not our armor, nor our use of it, which bringeth victory. We may be clad with the whole; but unless the LORD himself goeth forth, for the salvation of his people, our strength will be very weakness. Oh! how blessed, and how profitable it is, to behold CHRIST, fighting our battles, conquering sin, death, hell, and the grave, for his redeemed. Proclaiming war with all the foes of

his people, until he hath brought the whole under their feet. Oh! for grace to eye CHRIST in all the way through; and for ourselves to stand still, and see the salvation of GOD. I pray the Reader to seek for grace in order to a right apprehension of the glorious subject, for it is most glorious. *Paul* indeed, calls the weapons of warfare, *our* weapons; because, in fact, they are ours, when put into our hands by CHRIST. But the war is wholly his, the victory his, the blessedness, and the triumphs, his. I make a nice distinction between those things I and yet not more nice than scriptural. The SON of GOD it is, that brings his captives out of the prison-house, and destroys all that would keep them in bondage. No weapons, no warfare of theirs, contributes an atom towards the victory. And all their joy ariseth from what CHRIST hath done *for* them, not *by* them. It is CHRIST'S interest *in us* for the recovery of his spouse the Church; not our interest *in him*, which is the first, and predisposing cause of all. The comfort of a child of GOD, is not from the victories, which at times the LORD helps him to accomplish; over this foe, and that enemy; but in the full, and compleat triumphs and victories of CHRIST himself, in destroying the very nature of sin, and death; by destroying him that had the power of death, and for ever rooting out misery from among his people, Hebrews 2:14-15; Ephesians 1:10.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:7-18

(7) Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he *is* Christ's, even so *are* we Christ's. (8) For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed: (9) That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters. (10) For *his* letters, say they, *are* weighty

and powerful; but *his* bodily presence *is* weak, and *his* speech contemptible. (11) Let such a one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such *will we be* also in deed when we are present. (12) For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. (13) But we will not boast of things without *our* measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you. (14) For we stretch not ourselves beyond *our measure*, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in *preaching* the gospel of Christ: (15) Not boasting of things without *our* measure, *that is*, of other men's labors; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, (16) To preach the gospel in the *regions* beyond you, *and* not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand. (17) But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. (18) For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

It appears, from the whole of what is here said, that the faithful services of *Paul*, met with a very unkind reception, from those which owed him a different treatment. But so it is. And, no doubt, highly proper it should be. Holy men of old felt all this, but shrunk not from duty. Their object was, to shew themselves approved of GOD, not man. The scourge of tongues can hurt no further than the LORD permits. And, while JESUS smiles, it matters not who frowns. And perhaps, these very *Corinthians*, were at length subdued, and won over, by the conciliating spirit of the Apostle. Faithfulness is sure in the end, to be successful. And, in the mean time, that sweet promise to CHRIST, in Him, belongs also to all his seed. *No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee, in judgment thou shalt*

condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me saith the LORD, Isaiah 54:17.

Reflections

LAMB of GOD! be it my mercy to learn of thee, for thou art meek, and lowly in heart. Thou knowest, LORD! and blessed be thy Name, since thou wert pleased to call me by thy grace, that thou hast taught me, in some measure, also to know, that by nature, and by practice.

I am haughty and proud; and like ground thrown open, I am exposed to all the ravages of the wild beasts, and to the still worse ravages of my own poor, fallen, sinful, and corrupt affections. Precious JESUS! what a refreshing, sweet thought, to comfort me under these depressing circumstances; thou art the perfection of thy redeemed! Divinely fitted, and divinely disposed, to be the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, of thy people!

LORD! let me go forth to the holy war, in thy strength, and in thy power. Do thou put on me, all the holy armor. But while divinely clad, never, never, my glorious Head, may I for a moment forget, that all the victory is thine, and all the glory thine!

Send forth, LORD, thy servants, to the work of the ministry; and may they prove that they are thine, and sent by thee, in passing through evil report, as well as good report. Oh! the blessedness, amidst the strife of tongues, to have the SPIRIT'S testimony, that they have not run unsent, nor labored in vain.

GOD the HOLY GHOST speaking in them, and by them, to the hearts of his people.

Chapter 11

Contents

The Apostle in this Chapter, is defending himself, and his Ministry, against some that opposed him. He modestly speaks of his Trials, and Afflictions.

2 CORINTHIANS 11:1-3

(1) Would to God ye could bear with me a little in *my* folly: and indeed bear with me. (2) For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ. (3) But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

I would pass over every consideration of a private nature, as it relates to the person of the Apostle, to attend to those important points we meet with in this Chapter, which are of general moment to the Church. It is indeed to be lamented, that faithful servants of the LORD JESUS in all ages, like *Paul*, have been, for the most part, evil treated; while time-serving hirelings have been caressed, and often laden with worldly honors. But as the Apostle himself remarked, so the faithful of GOD ought to know, that *no man should be moved by these things, for they are appointed thereunto*, 1 Thessalonians 3:3. But, leaving the consideration of such subjects, it will be more to our purpose, to attend to what *Paul* hath here said, within the compass of these verses, on the jealousy of his soul, for

the stedfastness of the Church in the true faith of CHRIST. This opens to a most interesting point of the Gospel, and I beg the Reader's earnest attention to it.

There is somewhat very lovely, in the midst of all the unkindness, *Paul* received from the *Corinthians*, in what he saith of himself, of his godly jealousy over them. What a charming representation it gives, of the Apostle's mind. Their ill requital of his friendship, did not keep back his labors, for their welfare. The salvation of their souls was dear to him. And yet more the love of CHRIST constrained him. Say what they might of him, yet his regard for them should not lessen. Reader! do not fail to observe, how grace prompts the soul to act, and to rise above resentments. Oh! what a blessed thing would it be, if men possessed of grace, were to manifest, upon every occasion, the superiority of that grace, in returning good for evil, towards those whose natural tempers, unrestrained by grace, act improperly.

But while I notice this by the way, in relation to the Apostle's godly jealousy, I beg the Reader's attention to a yet far higher subject, brought before us in those words, in the cause of that jealousy; namely, *lest the minds of the people (Paul saith) should be led away from the simplicity that is in CHRIST.* I hardly know in the whole Scripture, a sweeter, and more comprehensive manner of expression than this, of the plainness to be observed in the apprehension of CHRIST. The Apostle considers the whole of the subject, concerning CHRIST and his Church, though infinite in itself, and extending to infinite blessings in its consequences; yet in the outlines of it, so simple, so plain, and so easily understood, under divine teaching; *that the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err*

therein. And in proof of it, the Apostle calls upon the Church, to consider it, under the similitude of CHRIST'S marriage of his Church; in which he shews, that she is espoused to her LORD for the express purpose of being presented to him finally, and compleatly, as a chaste virgin. I beg the Reader to look at the subject in this point of view, under two or three leading particulars, in confirmation.

First. It is one of the sweetest, highest, and most blessed truths, of our most holy faith, that from everlasting, the SON of GOD betrothed, or, (as it is here expressed,) espoused, his Church to himself, in an union, and Covenant, not to be broken, Hosea 2:19-20. For when JEHOVAH, in his threefold character of Persons, willed into being, from his everlasting love, the Church of GOD; this Church was chosen in CHRIST, and given to CHRIST. So that in the same moment, (let that moment be called by what name soever it may, in the language of heaven and eternity,) that CHRIST became the Head, and Husband of his Church; the Church became the body, and spouse of CHRIST: and was betrothed to her LORD: Hence all those precious Scriptures, Ephesians is 1:4; Isaiah 54:5; Jeremiah 3:14; Ephesians 5:25 to the end; John 17:2; John 17:6; John 17:9-10 &c. In this sweet point indeed, is contained the whole blessedness of the Church, for time and for eternity. All is founded upon this union. The Church of CHRIST had this secret grace-union with CHRIST, before she received her open nature in Adam. And, as CHRIST had in himself an infinite fulness of all blessings, both spiritual and eternal, for his seed, his spouse, his children, the Church; so, from their being chosen in him, and considered one with him, for receiving all communicable grace, during their time-state

upon earth, and all communicable glory, when brought home to Heaven; it was impossible, that their after-connection with Adam should subject them to the loss of those blessings, bestowed upon them before in CHRIST, and preserved in CHRIST; which were to be brought forth for their recovery from the Adam-nature of sin, in what in scripture language is called, the fulness of time, Galatians 4:4. As this view of the subject runs it up to the fountain-head of mercy, so is it very blessed at all times, to trace it to this source; in order to discover, how effectually in this union and espousing of CHRIST's, the Church is secured, from the woeful consequences of the fall, and everlasting ruin; the power and means of recovery, being securely laid, in the Person, work, and offices, of the Church's Husband, the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Secondly. JEHOVAH, in his threefold character of Persons, having thus from all eternity given, both Being, and well-being, to the Church in CHRIST; was pleased, for the accomplishment of his own sovereign, and gracious purposes, to go forth in acts of creation; and call into existence Adam the first man in nature, and with him, and from him, multitudes of his race, from whence the Church of JESUS might be gathered, during the time-state of the Church's existence upon earth. And the LORD was pleased, for the same wise, and blessed purposes, that the Church, being alike involved with the whole race of Adam in the ruins of the fall, should feel the awful consequences of her apostacy; and her glorious Head, and Husband, raise her up from those deplorable circumstances, and make her meet for to partake with him, in all his communicable grace and glory, both in time, and to all eternity.

Thirdly. We learn from this view of the subject, how in the incarnation of the SON of GOD, when he came, and openly tabernacled among us, all those great purposes were accomplished. He assumed our nature: in that nature paid the dreadful debt we had fallen under, both to law, and justice: cancelled the hand-writing of ordinances which was against us, taking it out of the way, and nailing it, to his cross: and having made our peace, by the sacrifice of himself; he returned to glory, to prepare a place for all his redeemed, until he shall come again to bring home his spouse to the everlasting enjoyment of himself in glory: that where he is, there his Church, shall be.

These are the outlines of what the Apostle meant to teach the Church, concerning their being espoused to CHRIST; and from the simplicity of which, he felt a godly jealousy; that they might not be tempted to depart. But we must observe what the Apostle saith, with the caution he himself intended it, and agreeably to the general tenor of *Paul's* preaching and ministry, when *he* talks of *having espoused them to one husband*; and that *he* might *present them; as a chaste virgin*, to CHRIST. Every one knows, that even in the common transactions of human marriages, it is the Bridegroom himself which espouseth the Bride, and not the friend of the Bridegroom. And, in this act of divine grace, which marks the LORD CHRIST, in his marrying our nature, JESUS speaks of it as his own act *I will betroth thee unto me for ever*, Hosea 2:19. And the day of the LORD'S manifestation to every one of his people, is called, the day of their espousals. *Thus saith the LORD, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousal, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness*

in a land that was not sown, Jeremiah 2:2. And in like manner, the Church is spoken of collectively, as *crowning the LORD JESUS, in the day of his espousals*, Song of Solomon 3:11.

So also, when the Apostle speaks of presenting the Church as a *chaste Virgin* to CHRIST; it is well known, that neither the first presentation of the Church to her Husband in grace, nor the final presentation of the Church in glory, is the act of men, or angels. All is *from* CHRIST himself, *to* himself; and, in every act of grace here, and glory hereafter, it is the LORD which worketh in his people, *both to will, and to do, of his good pleasure*. The HOLY GHOST, by the Apostle, refers the whole, and every act, into CHRIST. *He gave himself*, it is said, *for his Church, having loved it that he might sanctify and cleanse it, and present it to himself a glorious Church*, Ephesians 5:24-26.

Neither can it be said, in the present time-state of the Church, that CHRIST'S Church is presented as a chaste virgin; for though, from everlasting she is married to the LORD, and CHRIST is her first Husband; Hosea 2:7, yet as a treacherous wife, when the LORD called her by his grace, she was departed from the LORD, and He brought her back. Jeremiah 3:14; Jeremiah 3:20. But the Apostle's meaning is evidently in allusion to his labors in the ministry among them, when the LORD the SPIRIT owned and blessed the labors of Paul in his aim to allure them to CHRIST. And perhaps, in a more limited and confined sense the Church may be called chaste, when after her recovery from the Adam-fall of sin, she became cautious in the principles of faith, not suffering a corruption from the minglings of human invention, but through grace

was enabled to preserve a virginity in the pure doctrines of the Gospel, which at regeneration she received. We have a similar relation in this sense in the book of the Revelation: Revelation 14:3-5.

When the Reader hath duly attended to those proper distinctions, I would request a moment's notice further, to what I humbly conceive the Apostle had in view, when he called the faith, *the simplicity that is in CHRIST*. It is a beautiful, though short account, of the pure faith of CHRIST. And in an age like the present, deserves the more particular regard.

The simplicity that is in CHRIST, implies, (what in truth is the exact description of it,) that it is a, plain, sweet, simple, and impossible to be mistaken plan, under divine teaching, of JEHOVAH'S own providing, for the recovery of the Church, from the ruins of the fall. In which, each glorious Person of the GODHEAD comes forward in his office-character of love, and grace, to make the highly favored objects of that love happy in time, and happy to all eternity. So that everything in it is full of a beautiful simplicity. The everlasting love of GOD the FATHER to the Church in CHRIST, is expressed, in all the innumerable instances of it, in the most plain, gentle, tender, and affectionate manner. One Scripture contains in its bosom the sum and substance of every other: *GOD so loved the world that He gave his only begotten SON, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life*, John 3:16. In like manner, the everlasting love, of GOD the SON to the Church, is revealed in terms of equal simplicity, and grace. For He is said, *so to have loved the church as to have given himself for it, an offering and a sacrifice to GOD for*

a sweet smelling savor, Ephesians 5:2. And no less, the everlasting love of GOD the HOLY GHOST to the Church, comes home endeared to the heart with equal clearness, in that, it is said: *After that the kindness and love of GOD our SAVIOR toward man appeared, we were saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the HOLY GHOST, which he shed upon us abundantly through JESUS CHRIST our SAVIOR*, Titus 3:5-6. And what can be more plain, more simple, or more perspicuous, when we discover, that all our mercies flow from this united source, in the joint love, good-will, and unceasing affection of all the Persons of the GODHEAD.

Reader! do not hastily pass away from this view, of the simplicity that is in CHRIST! The Serpent beguiled *Eve* by his subtlety, in doing what? Even in seducing her to believe, that the simple act of faith, of believing in GOD, and depending wholly upon him, was too simple to give credit to; and, likening to his devilish devices, she fell. And what is the artifice of the Arch-fiend now? To tempt men to swerve from the simplicity that is in CHRIST, by supposing that CHRIST'S Person, work, righteousness, and blood shedding, are but procuring causes; and that our faith, sincerity, repentance, and the like, must be added, in order to render it effectual. And thus, the simplicity that is in CHRIST, the minds of some men are corrupted from the beautiful whole of CHRIST, in CHRIST, and from CHRIST, becomes mingled with creature-attainments. And, instead of accepting CHRIST, as the One only Ordinance of Heaven for salvation; men of this description teach their hearers, that their faith, their sincere endeavors in, obedience, and their sorrows for occasional departures, the LORD will accept; and in consequence bestow upon them grace, mercy, and favor,

through, JESUS CHRIST. How might the congregation exclaim against such false doctrines, *there is death in the pot?* 2 Kings. 4:40.

2 CORINTHIANS 11:4-15

(11) For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*. (5) For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. (6) But though *I be* rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things. (7) Have I committed an offense in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely? (8) I robbed other churches, taking *wages of them*, to do you service. (9) And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all *things* I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and *so* will I keep *myself*. (10) As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia. (11) Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth. (12) But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we. (13) For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. (14) And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. (15) Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

In the opening of this paragraph, in which, *Paul* speaks of one coming, and preaching another JESUS, or another SPIRIT, or Gospel, to which he adds, ye might well bear with him; the meaning at first sight, doth not seem so clear to be understood, In the margin of the Bible, the words *bear with him*, are rendered *bear with me*. And certain it is, that neither the one, nor the other, *him*, or *me*, are in the original. But it

should seem, that as the Apostle was complaining of their late unkindness to his person, and the jealousy he felt, lest they should be led away, from his ministry; he put the issue of judgment upon this point: that if there was a preacher, that could hold forth another JESUS, more divine, more lovely? more powerful to save; and more easy of access, to commit their souls into his hands for Salvation, and happiness, than Paul had shewed them: or another HOLY GHOST, more lovely and loving, more effectual to regenerate their fallen nature, and to lead them more effectually to CHRIST: or, in short, another Gospel, which contained more glad tidings, than he had preached; there might be a cause for suspending their attention to him. The Apostle stated the argument in this manner, by way of making it, the more manifest to their own hearts, how very weak, and childish it must have been in them, to pause for a moment over the reception of such a Gospel as he had brought for them, in proclaiming GOD'S CHRIST, and GOD'S SPIRIT, in all the fulness of grace, mercy, and salvation.

I pause, at what the Apostle saith concerning the transformation of Satan into an angel of light, to make a short observation, which may not be improper, *Satan* hath no power, to act as an angel of light; for by his apostacy, he is become an angel of darkness, Jude 6. But in his temptations, as in his first lie to *Eve*, he put on the appearance of meaning good, when the most desperate evil he intended; so in all his after temptations on our nature, his devilish sagacity will assume sometimes the most specious appearances of light, like the shining bogs of the earth, to decoy the incautious traveler into utter darkness; when his whole design is ruin,

and destruction, And the Apostle explains what he saith in allusion to *Satan*, by exemplifying it in the conduct of his ministers. Who more zealous, more apparently earnest for the divine glory, than those who hold forth the importance of a good life, as they call it? What volumes upon volumes have been published, and sermons upon sermons preached, in insisting upon good works, as among the means of salvation? What multitudes of studied compositions have been, still are, and must continue to be, as long as men untaught and unsent of GOD, minister in holy things, sent forth into the world, which like the heathen moralist descant upon the loveliness of virtue, and recommend men to follow after it in order to obtain the favor of GOD? And indeed, if such preachers of virtue and moral goodness, as they call it, had hearers of pure and virtuous hearts, able to the performance; (though even in this case, it would be totally, foreign to the Gospel of CHRIST;) there would be nothing cruel or offensive in such preaching and doctrine. But when it be considered, that all men are guilty, sinful, and stand, condemned before GOD; that none of the sons, or daughters of *Adam*, have any power of themselves to any one act of goodness; such Preachers are like the *Physicians* Job speaks of: *forgers of lies, and physicians of no value*, Job 13:4. How different are all such to *Paul's* preaching. *And I brethren,* (said he,) *when I came unto you declaring the testimony of GOD; determined not to know any thing among you save JESUS CHRIST and him crucified:* 1 Corinthians 2:1-2. This was *Paul's* Gospel. And elsewhere he saith: If any man preach any other gospel, let him be accursed, Galatians 1:9.

2 CORINTHIANS 11:16-31

(16) I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little. (17) That which I speak, I speak *it* not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. (18) Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also. (19) For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye *yourselves* are wise. (20) For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour *you*, if a man take *of you*, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face. (21) I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, I (speak foolishly,) I am bold also. (22) Are they Hebrews? so *am* I. Are they Israelites? so *am* I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so *am* I. (23) Are they ministers of Christ? I (speak as a fool) I *am* more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. (24) Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one. (25) Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; (26) *In* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; (27) In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. (28) Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. (29) Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? (30) If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. (31) The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed forevermore, knoweth that I lie not.

I would pass over all personal considerations concerning *Paul* himself, in the catalogue of sufferings his Apostleship brought upon him, in order to make the subject more generally profitable both to myself and Reader, in gathering from the whole suitable improvement respecting the special exercises of the faithful, during the present time-state of the Church.

That the LORD hath been pleased, for wise and gracious purposes, to bring his chosen people into peculiar exercises, is

a truth, too well confirmed in the scriptures of GOD, to need being insisted upon. That there is a *needs be* in them, both for the trial of those graces which the LORD gives them, and for their improvement under them, is most evident. This is spoken of in the book of the revelation twice with peculiar emphasis. *Here is the patience and faith of the saints*, Revelation 13:10. See also Revelation 14:12, likewise 1 Peter 1:6. And there is not only conformity to the LORD JESUS in the appointments of this nature; but among other great objects intended from them, they minister, to shew the unceasing need we have of CHRIST. Reader! depend upon it, so deep and deep-rooted is the plague of the heart, by reason of the fall, that no man, and in the largest discoveries, hath ever compleatly learnt the whole of it during the whole life of grace, while here below. We must enter upon our eternal state, before that we shall have suitable and perfect apprehensions; either of our own desperate circumstances, by reason of sin, or of the infinite preciousness of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, as alone suited to bring his people out of them. *Job* appears to have had ideas in exact correspondence to these things, respecting the use and appoint, rent of soul exercises. He knew that there was a depth of sin in the human heart, deeper than he himself could fathom. And he considered his exercises, as directed to help a poor sinner to this discovery, through divine teaching. Under those impressions, he cried out, *If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me. If I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul. I would despise my life.* What a strength of expression is here, of a mind deeply sensible of deep-rooted sin and transgression? And with what earnestness doth the holy mourner seem to be

looking for deliverance from the whole power and guilt of it, in a resource not his own. If the Reader will read to the close of this quotation from *Job*, he will see how vehemently the saint of GOD was panting for the LORD JESUS CHRIST, as the only *Days-man*, or *Mediator*, which could remedy the breach sin had made, sanctify all the afflictions arising out of sin, and restore perfect order among all the works of GOD, Job 9:20 to the end, compared with Job 19:25-27.

That *Paul's* apprehensions were similar to those of *Job*, is not to be wondered at, seeing both were taught under the same divine Teacher. And what the Apostle saith, of glorying in his infirmities, does nor mean the infirmities of sin; in that a nature sunk and fallen, and the subject of sin, was exposed to the consequences of it in suffering, but that those very distresses which arose from sin, and which the LORD brought him through, had the sweet ministry to lead to the LORD JESUS. And the Apostle, in the close of the account, looks up to him who searcheth the heart, in testimony, that he spake the truth as it is in JESUS. Faithful servant of the LORD! how graciously the LORD taught thee to extract sweet from bitter, and to feel the preciousness of JESUS yet more, from having felt in sin the greater need of JESUS!

2 CORINTHIANS 11:32-33

(32) In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me:

(33) And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.

We have an account of this gracious deliverance of the Apostle out of the hands of his enemies; Acts 9:23-25. *Paul's* history is not given to us in one continued relation, but in

fragments in the word of GOD. We know that he, was in his way to *Damascus* when the LORD JESUS called to him from heaven. And his immediate preaching CHRIST, brought upon him the indignation of the Jews. But the many escapes *Paul* experienced, some of which are recorded in the preceding part of this chapter, may serve to teach us how this faithful servant of the LORD went about in his ministry, with his life always as in his hand. But how blessed to hear him say; as he did to the elders of the Church of *Ephesus: None of those things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the LORD JESUS, to testify the Gospel of the grace of GOD, Acts 20:24.*

Reflections

READER! who can behold the warmth and zeal of the Apostle in his godly jealousy over the *Corinthian* Church, in their espousals to CHRIST, without feeling an anxiety and jealousy over our own hearts, in relation to our own? Shall not you and I be very earnest to know ourselves betrothed as chaste virgins to CHRIST? Hath JESUS indeed, notwithstanding all our poverty, loathsomeness by sin, and all the reproached state of the fall, married our persons, taken an interest in all our concerns, nourished us, cherished us, and with all *the* tenderness and love of the bridegroom, provides for all our wants, and for ever doing the part of the most affectionate husband; and shall we not feel our attachment to One who hath so loved us, as to give himself for us? Shall *Satan* beguile our hearts as he did *Eve*? Shall any temptation lead away from the beautiful simplicity that is in CHRIST?. Oh! thou

glorious and all-sufficient SAVIOR! In thee is a fulness and an all-sufficiency of the most compleat salvation! In thee GOD is well pleased t. So LORD may be all thy people.

And if any come and preach another JESUS! if any speak of another SPIRIT, another Gospel, Oh! may the LORD silence all false teachers, all false Apostles. LORD, in compassion to the souls of men, stop the mouths of those, which run unsent of thee. And whatever specious garb they come under, though transformed as angels or light; yet, whatever tends not to honor CHRIST, let all thy faithful servants be kept from their delusion, and be enabled to resist their deceitful wiles. If any man love not our LORD JESUS CHRIST, let him be *Anathema Maranatha!* Oh! for grace to be kept from all evil, and all the malice of the foe, as *Paul*, let down by the wall, and escaping their hands. And, oh! for grace in spirituals, to be kept by the power of GOD, through faith unto salvation.

Chapter 12

Contents

Paul is here speaking of Visions and Revelations, with which the LORD favored him. He speaks of his Infirmities.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:1

(1) It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

As every thing relating to those supernatural manifestations *Paul* was favored with, and which GOD the HOLY GHOST hath been pleased to have recorded , for the comfort of the

Church, becomes highly interesting; I would here more particularly beg the Reader's attention. All the visions and revelations which have been made to the Church, in the several periods of it have been uniformly intended to bring the Church, into some acquaintance with the Person, and eternal glory of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, as GOD-man mediator. As CHRIST in his Person, that is GOD and man in one is the first in all JEHOVAH'S designs, and in Him, and through Him, and by Him, all revelations of JEHOVAH, in his threefold character of Persons are made, or capable of being made towards the LORD'S intelligent creation; so, the ultimate end and design is, to centre all the glory of JEHOVAH; that is capable of being made visible to his creation, in the Person of the GOD-man CHRIST JESUS, that at the last day, all GOD'S creatures may behold in Him the final issue of all JEHOVAH'S decrees, in all the purposes of revelation, Ephesians 1:10. Hence all those occasional glories which have been shewn the Church, during the different periods of the Church, both under the Old Testament dispensation and the New, have been with the express design to bring the Church into an acquaintance with her LORD'S Person and glory, as GOD-man mediator. And for this end, and to this purpose, theseveral servants of the LORD, as so many representatives of his Church, have been favored with these glorious manifestations, such as *Paul* is here about to speak of, and such as we read of others, both in the Old and New Testaments, Exodus 3:2 &c; Exodus 24:9 to the end; Joshua 5:13 &c; Isaiah 6:1 &c, with John 12:41; Ezekiel 1:4-28; Daniel 10:5-6; Matthew 17:1-9.

Reader! before we proceed, let us pause over the subject. If you recollect, when the LORD JESUS CHRIST was about to return

to heaven, and when redemption-work was nearly finished, JESUS addressed himself in these remarkable words to his FATHER: *And now, O FATHER, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was,* John 17:5. The question is, what glory is here meant? Not, surely, the glory essential in the GODHEAD, for this was, and is, the SON of GOD'S own, unasked, underived, eternal, and unchangeable. But the glory which CHRIST had, as CHRIST, that is, GOD and man in one Person, in his covenant subsistence, and in his mediatorial glory before all worlds. This glory, except in the occasional burstings forth of it, as we read upon several instances in scripture, when it brake forth through the manhood, had been obscured during the ministry of JESUS upon earth. But now the offices which he came to perform, being fulfilled, JESUS thus spake in that sweet scripture, of being again glorified with his own personal glory as Mediator, which he possessed in this Almighty character before the earth was laid.

Now let us connect with this original and eternal glory of the GOD-man mediator, which JESUS possessed before he openly assumed humanity, and came upon earth, the glory of the same Almighty character, *when he shall come to be glorified with his saints, and be admired in all that believe,* 2 Thessalonians 1:10, and we shall then form some faint, however imperfect idea, of those intermediate visions and revelations, in which the LORD hath been pleased to make himself known unto his people. Every manifestation is with a view to glorify JESUS. Every revelation hath this for its great and leading object. And *Peter's* explanation of the instance he had, when with *James* and *John* in the mount, plainly shews

for what purpose, in every instance, the mercy was granted. *We were eye-witnesses* (said Peter) *of his Majesty. For he received from GOD the FATHER honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved SON, in whom I am well pleased,* 2 Peter 1:16-17. If the Reader be enabled to connect those views of CHRIST'S personal glory, as GOD-man before all worlds, and CHRIST'S personal glory, as GOD man at the end of the world; he will then, under the same divine teaching, be prepared for the right apprehension of all the visions and revelations of the LORD which have ever taken place in the present time-state of the Church, and he will also be the better qualified to enter into the apprehension of the One which *Paul* had, as he hath related in this chapter.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:2-6

(2) I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such a one caught up to the third heaven. (3) And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) (4) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. (5) Of such a one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. (6) For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but *now* I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me *to be*, or *that* he heareth of me.

There are so many precious and blessed things contained in this vision the Apostle was favored with, that I can only glance at them in the mere outlines of the subject, without entering largely into the particulars.

And *first*. The Apostle saith, that *he knew a man in CHRIST*; and there can be no doubt, from what he soon after added,

concerning the abundance of revelations given to him (2 Corinthians 12:7), that he meant himself. And it was no uncommon thing, in the Eastern world, for men to speak of themselves as in the third person. Indeed it is not unusual now. And upon the present occasion, Paul studied to avoid all vain-glory. By the expression itself of a man in CHRIST, it is plain Paul meant one of CHRIST'S people, his seed, his chosen. And of all these it must be said, that every individual of CHRIST'S seed was in CHRIST from all eternity, for they *were chosen in CHRIST before the foundation of the world*, Ephesians 1:4. And all the purposes and grace designed the Church in time, with the sure hope of eternal life in the world to come, were all given to every individual of the Church, *before the world began*, 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2. Of CHRIST'S whole seed, it may be truly said, as was said by the Holy GHOST of *Levi*, being in the loins of his father *Abraham*, when *Melchizedeck* met him; so all of CHRIST'S seed were in Him, and He their everlasting FATHER from all eternity, Hebrews 7:10; Isaiah 9:6. Hence those sweet promises: Isaiah 44:3; Isaiah 59:21.

A man in CHRIST is one of the members of CHRIST'S mystical body: And having been chosen in CHRIST, when CHRIST at the call of GOD; stood up the Head and Husband of his people before all worlds; so; in the time-state of the Church, every man in CHRIST is proved to belong to CHRIST by regeneration, adoption, justification, and grace. Hence, as *Paul* elsewhere saith, *his life is hid with CHRIST in GOD*; Colossians 3:3, a life of secrecy, security, and interest in all that belongs to CHRIST. He is, therefore, properly called one in CHRIST, beheld in CHRIST, accepted in CHRIST, justified in CHRIST, sanctified in CHRIST,

and must be, finally, glorified in CHRIST. And thus the HOLY GHOST testifieth: *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. 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 8:29-30. Reader! are you a man in CHRIST?

In relation to the time of this vision, with which *Paul* was favored, the Apostle dates it about *fourteen years* before the time that he wrote this Epistle. And it appears, at the close of the next chapter that he wrote it from *Philippi*; consequently, it must have been about the year 60 when written, and fourteen years before would place the vision in the *eleventh* year after his conversion. Some have conceived that this vision is the same, which is spoken of when *Paul* arrived at *Jerusalem*, Acts 22:17. But it should, seem to have been a perfectly distinct revelation, and to a very different purport from that. It appears to me, I confess, to have been a very glorious manifestation of the Person of CHRIST, similar, or perhaps in greater degree, to those with which the saints of GOD in the Old Testament were favored, for the special comfort of those holy servants of th LORD, as well as for the general confirmation of the faith. But, certain it is, that the revelation was so abundant and overwhelming, that during the continuance of it, the Apostle was altogether unconscious of any bodily sensations. See Ezekiel 8:3; Daniel 8:15; Daniel 8:18; Daniel 8:27; Revelation 1:10.

The paradise, or third heaven, the Apostle speaks of (for he calls it by both names,) evidently mean one and the same;

and seems to be in conformity to the Jewish notions; who, when speaking at any time of heaven, were accustomed to call it paradise. There doth not, however, appear any reason assigned wherefore it is called the *third* heaven. The generally received opinion is, that it is the blessed habitation of the spirits of just men made perfect, Luke 23:43. Several scriptures seem to favor the opinion, but none decide. And, as the HOLY GHOST is silent on the subject, it becomes us to be also, and not presume to be wise above what is written, Revelation 6:9-10. Indeed there is nothing so weak as men's conjectures on subjects of this sublime nature. Paul's own account of this is that had heard unspeakable words or such as a man cannot utter. How then can another explain, or even form an idea of them? Reader! it is enough, for the exercise of faith, to receive from GOD the HOLY GHOST the record of the fact. Here then we ought to rest. It is a sad misuse of the word of GOD, when upon any exercise of mystery we become reasoners instead of believers.

I pray the Reader to notice the Apostle's words, when passing by all glorying on account of the wonderful condescension of his LORD, he declares his wish, rather to glory in his infirmities. By which we are to suppose *Paul* meant, not the desperately wicked state of his heart in the days of his unregeneracy, for there could be nothing to glory in them; but rather the circumstances, which, arising out of a fallen state, made CHRIST dear, and kept the soul humble. And, indeed, the word *infirmities* means as much. Some have thought the infirmities *Paul* alluded to, were only such as he mentions in the tenth verse, where he speaks of taking pleasure in them, in being reproached and persecuted for

CHRIST'S sake. And, no doubt, these exercises afforded much satisfaction when ever, in suffering shame for the name of JESUS, Acts 5:41. But had these been all, and *Paul* had had no other infirmities in himself to be humbled for; it is to be apprehended by what we see and know of human nature, that instead of glorying in infirmities which kept the soul humble and made CHRIST dear, *Paul*, as well as other saints of GOD, would have become proud of what some men talk of, but none in themselves know, a fancied holiness, inherent in themselves, and which must render in their view, CHRIST less and less necessary. Reader! I pray you to pause over the subject, and may GOD the HOLY GHOST be your teacher. *Paul* felt, if I mistake not, what all the children taught of GOD feel, daily infirmities from a body of sin and death, which makes the LORD JESUS dear, yea, increasingly dear and precious. And those infirmities compelled him to seek strength from CHRIST, in like manner as the hunger of an healthy man compels him to seek food. *Paul's* daily wants, daily cravings, daily emptiness, taught him that he could not live upon past attainments, but JESUS was needful every day, and all the day, and without those supplies from the LORD, he should go lean and barren. It was not the having been caught up to the third heaven would satisfy his soul, when he found his soul afterwards encompassed by a body of flesh and blood, and returned to the earth. He, therefore, gloried that those infirmities made him sensible where he was, and how increasingly needful CHRIST was to keep him humble, and exalt the SAVIOR. And very sure I am, that every child of GOD, truly taught of GOD, knows the same by daily experience. My sense of sin makes CHRIST's blood precious. My poverty in spirituals gives A blessed occasion to seek and make use of

his riches. And my conscious weakness, unless supported and upheld by the LORD my righteousness, makes me continually cry out: *Hold thou me up, and shall be safe: and then shall I have respect unto thy statutes continually*, Psalm 119:117. Reader! what knowledge have you of these things? When a child, of GOD makes use of his experiences in this way, that by feeling and knowing in himself his own nothingness, and his wants of JESUS increasing, and his desires after JESUS more pressing; this is to make our experiences profitable, because they lead to CHRIST instead of leading from CHRIST. But when men live, as, the major part of those who profess the truths of GOD do live, upon a work, as they suppose, wrought in them, rather than what CHRIST hath wrought for them, and instead of drawing comfort wholly from CHRIST, they take it from themselves, magnifying the effect before the cause; this is inverting things, and living upon CHRIST, if it can be called living, at second hand. Better to be humbled with an infirmity, than made proud with some supposed merit. Reader! do not dismiss the subject without due consideration!

2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-10

(7) And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. (8) For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. (9) And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (10) Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

It would lead into a very extensive subject of enquiry, and after all be only matter of conjecture, what this sharp exercise of the Apostle consisted in. Some have thought, that by a thorn in the flesh, is meant heavy sickness of the body. *Others*, the lusts of the flesh, corruptions, temptations to uncleanness, and the like, and which are in the fullest and most grievous sense of the word, thorns in the flesh. And *some* have thought that in the latter days of the Apostle, he had an impediment in his speech, and which mightily afflicted him, because he could not speak of the glories of CHRIST with that eloquence as heretofore. And from what *Paul* himself hath said in this same Epistle, it is very probable that he was so afflicted. See chapter 10:10 (2 Corinthians 10:10). *Others* accept the words in their literal sense, and conclude that this messenger of *Satan* acted upon *Paul* as he had upon *Job*, personally tempting and buffeting the Apostle. But the HOLY GHOST is silent upon the subject of what nature the affliction was, only relating *enough* to shew, that it bore hard upon *Paul*, to compel him to fly to CHRIST. And also observing, (and which is highly important to regard,) that the permission of this exercise was, lest from the abundance of revelations with which *Paul* was blessed, temptations of a different nature, to induce spiritual pride, might arise.

Reader! before we proceed, let us pause over this view. Here is an Apostle of CHRIST brought under humbling providences of very sore temptations, lest from an abundance of grace, his mind should be lifted up with a supposed excellency in himself, as if his merit, and not grace alone, was the sole cause of the distinguishing mercy. And doth it not teach us, among other blessed things, to form those profitable

conclusions, and which, under grace, may be highly improved. As *first*, that where the LORD gives great grace, there may be expected in the same persons, great occasions for the exercise of it. Grace and corruption are near neighbors, and dwell close together. A child of GOD, when regenerated, is holy altogether in spirit, while in body altogether sinful; hereby *sin appears* more clearly what it is, *exceeding sinful*. Hence many of GOD'S dear children, which have large portions of grace, have large portions of corruptions, which need the LORD'S grace to keep under. And blessed, yea, very blessed it is, when a child of GOD feels the aboundings of indwelling sin, to feel also the more abounding manifestations of grace, that sin shall not have dominion over him!

Secondly. Nothing under the influence of GOD the SPIRIT; tends so effectually to keep open a constant spring of true sorrow in the soul, as a constant sense of those thorns in the flesh, in the remains of indwelling corruption. Self loathing, and self abhorring, are sweet tokens of holy mourning. A man will go softly all his day, as long as those thorns goad and prick him. The LORD'S account of his people, under those humbling circumstances, is very striking: *And there shall ye remember your ways and all your doings wherein ye have been defiled: and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed: and ye shall know that I am the LORD*, Ezekiel 20:43-44.

And, *thirdly*, as a very blessed property which springs out of those thorny dispensations, nothing can operate so effectually, under the LORD'S grace, to hide pride from the eyes, and to throw to the ground every budding forth of self-righteousness, as the conscious sense of daily infirmity.

Reader! depend upon it, nothing is more odious in the sight of GOD, than when dust and ashes become proud. When a child of GOD is tempted, after many humblings, by reason of sin, yet still to take up with the supposed idea of somewhat good in him. This dreadful weed, which is the very ground-sill of our nature, planted by the devil, is rooted in our very inmost affections. And the humblest of GOD's people too often discover, when grace enables them to discern spiritually, the buddings forth again and again of the baleful blossom. Now, it is the LORD'S mercy, when, like *Paul*, lest there should be an exalting above measure, a thorn in the flesh breaks out afresh.

And what is infinitely above all; *fourthly*, and lastly, let me observe, nothing preacheth CHRIST in his Person, glory, and absolute necessity, as when from messengers of Satan, and thorns in the flesh, my soul daily feels my whole need of JESUS. Oh! how precious CHRIST is, when the enemy cometh in like a flood? Oh! who knows the value, the infinitely precious value of CHRIST, but he who feels most his utterly lost estate without him. Reader! what are your views of these things?

The earliest cry of *Paul*, and the repeated cry of *thrice*, and, no doubt, with great vehemency, may best serve to shew how the affliction pressed upon him. But what I particularly desire the Reader not to overlook, is, that the cries were directed to the LORD JESUS CHRIST. *Paul* remembered how JESUS delivered his people from the influence and dominion of *Satan*, when He was upon earth, and, therefore, to Him he looked for deliverance now He was in heaven. Sweet is it to learn from hence, how specially and personally JESUS little ones are to look to Him under their temptations. He who was led up by

the SPIRIT into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, knows in his own experience what temptations are, and how to succor the tempted. And; as an angel was sent to CHRIST, in his unequalled hours of sorrow; so will He impart all suited strength to the sorrows of his tempted people, Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:43; Hebrews 2:14-18. CHRIST'S answer to the Apostle, upon this occasion, is most blessed, full, sufficient, and abundantly satisfactory. And what is never to be lost sight of, this answer, though addressed to *Paul* for the moment of his immediate necessity, is as much in reality said to every child of GOD, under similar circumstances of exercise and trial, and equally to be brought into use by the whole redeemed family. It is as if JESUS said to you, to me, to each, to all, my grace is sufficient for *thee*; meaning, that there is a sufficiency of grace laid up for each and for all, and always ready to be given out in the very moment of need. CHRIST'S grace is in exact correspondence to the want of each. It is laid up for that child from everlasting. It is, as if JESUS said, I foresaw the very portion which would be required, and have kept it, and do keep it, for the time foreseen, and provided for! Our JESUS *is El-shaddai*, GOD all-sufficient. And his mercies are mediator-mercies, that is GOD-man mercies. His GODHEAD providing an everlasting fulness of supply. And his *Manhood* sweetly assimilating them to our special joy and comfort, coming also *from* and *through*, and *in* a nature like our own. My grace, my mediator-grace is sufficient for thee! And both the occasion for the display of it, and the opportunity for the magnifying of it are in exact proportion to the precise wants of my people, my strength becoming the more conspicuous to their view in their creature-weakness. Reader! pause over those gracious words of CHRIST, and may the LORD give both to Writer and

Reader of this *Poor Man's Commentary* unceasing evidences of their sweet application upon every occasion of their exercises.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:11-21

(11) I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. (12) Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. (13) For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except *it be* that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong. (14) Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. (15) And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. (16) But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile. (17) Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you? (18) I desired Titus, and with *him* I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? *walked we* not in the same steps? (19) Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but *we do* all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying. (20) For I fear, lest when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and *that* I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest *there be* debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: (21) *And* lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and *that* I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

I have already observed, that everything as relating to the Apostle's person, hath been, as much as could be, avoided enlarging upon. The Church of *Corinth*, (of whose infirmities and unkindness to him *Paul* complained,) and *Paul* himself, (with all those complaints,) have long since ceased. Our

improvements of those sweet scriptures, are to be directed to such parts of them as are detached from all matters of a private, transient nature, and are of public and everlasting usefulness its the Church of CHRIST. And these are very sweet and precious. It will be our mercy to be looking unto the SPIRIT for grace, while perusing those holy records concerning the Church, that the improvements the LORD intended for them may not be overlooked by us, but that CHRIST'S grace to us, as it was to the Apostle, may be suited in all departments, and with all-sufficiency, that we may find cause, as *Paul* did, to give JESUS all the glory, when his strength is made perfect in our weakness, and we find more strength' in the LORD, when discovering greater weakness in ourselves.

Reflections

READER! let us pause and contemplate the highly favored state of the LORD's faithful servant, thus admitted to visions and revelations of GOD. No doubt, the very recollection warmed his soul in all the after stages of life. *Paul* felt the blessedness of them, and, like *Peter*, well knew, to his soul's joy, that he had not followed cunningly devised fables, when was made known unto him the power and coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, but was an eye-witness of his majesty. Reader! though the manifestations the LORD JESUS now makes to his people are not so splendid, for they are not now so necessary for confirmation to the Church, yet are they equally sure for the private consolation of every child of GOD. When GOD the HOLY GHOST in regeneration, calls his redeemed from the *Adam*-darkness of nature to the light of life in CHRIST, not

unfrequently, his manifestations are so sweet and gracious, that their remembrance becomes a comfort, through all the after parts of life. Yea, many a child of GOD in a dying hour, like *Jacob* in recollection of his *Bethel*, and *Moses* of his *Bush*, hath found the cold, clammy sweat of death unable to destroy the warm fervor of the precious remembrance! Oh! for grace for the soul to live in the enjoyment of CHRIST; and, sure I am, CHRIST himself will be the enjoyment of the soul in death!

Reader! do not overlook the personal interest which every child of GOD hath in the LORD JESUS'S sweet answer to *Paul: My grace is sufficient for thee!* Messengers of *Satan*, thorns in the flesh, infirmities and reproaches, these all belong to the present time-state of the Church. There is a needs-be for them. The Church of GOD is passing through a wilderness, and cannot get to heaven without them. But JESUS knows them all, permits them all, overrules them all, sanctifies all. And JESUS hath, from all eternity, the very portion of grace to bear up all his members under all, as is exactly suited to all, and will assuredly give it out to each, and to all in the hour of need. Precious LORD JESUS! may I never lose sight of this! my GOD, my SAVIOR hath the very portion of grace I require for this and that occasion, and I have nothing to do but to ask it from him as oft as that occasion shall require. Amen! My GOD will then suit His strength to my weakness, and *bruise Satan under my feet shortly!*

Chapter 13

Contents

The Apostle in closing his second Epistle, refers the Corinthians to the Testimony of the threefold Witness, in Confirmation of the Truths he had written to them, and ends with his Apostolical Blessing.

2 CORINTHIANS 13:1

(1) This *is* the third *time* I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

I take occasion from what *Paul* here saith of a two or threefold witness, in confirmation of general truths, to observe to the Reader; what a blessed testimony the Church of GOD hath everlastingly to rest upon in the HOLY THREE, which bear record in heaven, and which Three are One, 1 John 5:7. All the Persons of the GODHEAD have set to their seal, of *the truth as it is in JESUS*. Three times from heaven, during our LORD's ministry upon earth, GOD the FATHER, by an audible voice, confirmed the glories of his Person, and the authority of his mission, Matthew 3:16-17; Matthew 17:5; John 12:28-30. JESUS himself appeals both to his FATHER's testimony, and his own, in proof of the same thing: *it is also written (saith JESUS) in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the FATHER that sent me beareth witness of me*, John 8:17-18; Deuteronomy 17:6 and Deuteronomy 19:15. And GOD the HOLY GHOST, by his descent at the day of *Pentecost*, according to CHRIST'S most sure promise, as well as in the spirit of every child of GOD, beareth witness of CHRIST, Luke 24:49, Acts 2:1-4; Romans 8:15-16. Reader what know you of this threefold witness to your soul's joy? Romans 15:13.

2 CORINTHIANS 13:2-4

(2) I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare: (3) Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you. (4) For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

I pause at this last verse, for it is a most interesting one, to consider for a moment how blessedly the HOLY GHOST speaks of CHRIST'S being crucified through weakness. *Paul* very likely meant it in allusion, to-himself; that as CHRIST, in the days of his flesh; appeared in all the poverty and humbleness with which his character was marked, and was, nevertheless, in the moment so appearing, just as much as ever GOD'S dear SON; so *Paul* meant to tell the *Corinthians*, that his poverty and outward appearance ought not to have lessened him in their esteem, for he had fully proved the HOLY GHOST'S authority in their hearts, in sending him to them, to preach the Gospel. But I shall beg to call the Reader's attention to what *Paul* hath here said in relation to CHRIST'S being crucified in weakness, to a much higher consideration, than in accommodating it to *Paul's* history.

It is in my view a beautiful portion of GOD the SPIRIT'S gift to the Church, in teaching the LORD'S people to behold immense blessings, held forth under slender appearances. CHRIST crucified through weakness is a comprehensive expression, alluding to the human nature of the LORD JESUS. In *all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren*. The very nature he came to redeem, he must take into union with his GODHEAD. He must be made like unto sinful flesh. Like unto it.

That is, sin only excepted, he must be the very same. Weak, and subject to all the frailties and infirmities his sinless nature could be the subject of, capable of sustaining sufferings and death. Hence, in that weakness he was crucified and died. But to demonstrate at the same time, that though JESUS endured those sufferings and death, for his body the Church, it was all voluntary, and as the Surety of his Church, for his divine power brake out through the vail of his body, in many acts which demonstrated his GODHEAD, both in the wonders of his cross, and his triumph over death in rising again. For, saith the HOLY GHOST by *Paul* concerning him, *he was declared to be the SON of GOD with power, according to the SPIRIT of holiness, by his resurrection from the dead*, Romans 1:4. Reader! are not these sweet views of JESUS? Is it not blessed, by the way, here; and there interspersed in the Apostle's writings, to find such blessed, testimonies, as GOD the HOLY GHOST gives, of the precious union or GOD and man, in the Person of CHRIST?

2 CORINTHIANS 13:5-13

(5) Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? (6) But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates. (7) Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates. (8) For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. (9) For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, *even* your perfection. (10) Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction. (11) Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. (12) Greet one another with a holy kiss. (13) All the saints salute you.

I pass over every thing of a private nature, which took place between *Paul* and the Church of *Corinth*, to attend wholly to such as concern the Church of GOD in all ages. What the Apostle saith of proving themselves and examining themselves, by way of ascertaining the reality of their CHRISTIAN calling, is an employment suited to the Church of CHRIST, and to every member of CHRIST'S body in every generation. The only caution to be observed in doing this, is, to form our conclusions by the LORD'S standard, and not our own. Most are apt to err in their calculations for want of attending to this grand distinction. Our safety is in CHRIST, not in ourselves. And, hence I draw my conclusions of happiness in the SPIRIT'S testimony from what I am to CHRIST, and CHRIST to me, and not from what I feel of those things. It may be at times, from various causes, my joys in those things are not at hand, but the things themselves are the same. Therefore, the unerring standard in proving ourselves is: GOD'S manifestation of his love of his people in CHRIST, and not their sense of this love. There will be, there must be; a continual fluctuation between hope and fear, while men are looking to a somewhat within, instead of always looking off self unto CHRIST. It is his putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself, which is the sole cause of our salvation; our apprehension of Him, and his finished work by faith, is the effect. While believers prove themselves by this standard, they never fail to discover the state of grace in which they stand, *and rejoice in hope of the glory of GOD*. Romans 5: 1--5.

Reader! do not overlook with what sweet affection *Paul* closeth up the subject, however sharply he had found occasion to speak to the *Corinthians*, in a way of reproof:

Finally, brethren, farewell! It is not the happiness of all faithful ministers, to be favored with an opportunity of a personal interview with their people, when taking an everlasting farewell upon earth of them; but, whether, in person, or by letter, nothing can be more

suited than what *Paul* hath here said: *Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the GOD of love and peace shall be with you!* What could *Paul* say, what ought he to have said beyond these precious things? *Perfect* (as he saith elsewhere) in CHRIST JESUS, Colossians 1:28. All perfection is in Him. And his people have no perfection but in Him. All their acceptance, justification, sanctification; grace here, glory for ever; all, and every portion is *in* Him, from Him, *by* Him. And, oh! what endless, uninterrupted comfort must arise in the soul, through the SPIRIT, from such views, and such a consciousness of perfection in CHRIST? One mind, one heart, one desire, one object, would mark the Church for ever, when thus established. And very sure must be His presence among them; and in them, as the sun, in the centre of the world, diffusing life and light in every direction, where these blessings are found; because GOD, as the GOD of love and peace, who is Himself love, and the sole author and giver of love and peace to his people, cannot but be the fountain from whence the streams flow, and to whom they tend, and in whom they centre. *The GOD of love and peace be with you!*

2 CORINTHIANS 13:14

(14) The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, *be* with you all. Amen.

Here, like another *Solomon*, the Apostle comes *to the conclusion of the whole matter*, Ecclesiastes 12:13. And, as *Aaron*, was commanded of GOD on this wise to bless the people; so *Paul*, Numbers 6:22, to the end. Reader! take a leisurely survey of the wonderful expressions herein contained. In baptism, at the first introduction to the Church of CHRIST, no sooner brought from the *Adam-nature* of sin, and brought into the Portal of life in CHRIST, but we are baptized into the joint name of the HOLY THREE, agreeably to our LORD's appointment, Matthew 28:19-20. And all along the pilgrimage way in CHRIST, the Church is blessed in the joint name, and refreshed, comforted, and strengthened in the joint blessing of the grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the love of GOD, and the communion of the HOLY GHOST! Oh! how blessed are the people thus blessed, *who know the joyful sound, and walk in the light of the LORD'S countenance!*

I stay not in this place to enter into a particular and critical enquiry, concerning the difference (if any here intended) between the *grace* of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the *love* of GOD; and the *communion* of the HOLY GHOST. I rather accept the sweet expressions, as altogether intended to convey to the Church every thing that is blessed, and lovely, and loving. Neither do I desire to do more than merely to notice, at this time, the *order* in which these distinct blessings from the glorious Persons are spoken of. First, of GOD the SON; next, the FATHER; and next, GOD the HOLY GHOST, See I Peter 1:2. But I would beg to ask the Reader, or rather, I would beg of him to ask himself, whether by what is said of the *communion* of the HOLY GHOST, is not implied *conversation*? The Reader should be told, that the word, which in this passage is

rendered *communion*, is the same word, as in 1 John 1:3, is rendered *fellowship*. And is not fellowship or communion, conversation, partnership, intimacy, familiarity? And if so, how sweetly doth this verse preach to the Church, of the *Person*, as well as the love, of GOD the HOLY GHOST? And while preaching of his *Person*, how sweetly also doth it relate to us of his love, and his delight in holding communion with his people? So that, were I to say by letter, or by word of mouth, as *Paul* here wrote to the Church, of my prayer to GOD, that the Church might have the communion of the HOLY GHOST; it is in effect, saying, I pray that GOD the HOLY GHOST may sweetly and graciously converse with you, talk with you, commune with you, in all, his manifestations and love to the Church. *Paul* certainly had such views of the HOLY GHOST; for, in his Epistle to the *Philippians*, he makes the fellowship of the SPIRIT, and the consolations of CHRIST, as one and the same, and arguments of the same weight, to enforce what he was going to say to them, Philippians 2:1. And how doth JESUS, our JESUS, *personally* make sweet his *consolations* to us, but by his visits and conversation? And is not the SPIRIT'S *fellowship* made known the same way? Revelation 3:20. And are we not called upon to hear what the SPIRIT *saieth* unto the Churches, Revelation 3:22. Oh! for grace to set our Amen to all the truths of our GOD, while our GOD so graciously sets His!

Reflections

My soul! my Reader! let us both pause, and ponder well the sacred and sweet contents of this closing chapter of the Apostle. It opens with the assurances of two or three witnesses establishing every word. An, you and I, have the

Three heavenly witnesses bearing record, that eternal life is in GOD'S SON. And the chapter ends with the blessings of those heavenly witnesses, in their grace, and love, and communion with the Church while upon earth; thus confirming the whole in personal proof. Reader! what say you to such decided records, *to the truth as it is in JESUS*. Oh! for grace, seeing we are encompassed with such witnesses, *to run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto JESUS, the Author and Finisher of our faith!*

Farewell *Paul!* farewell for the present, while we thank thee, as the LORD's servant and minister, for those labors of love, with which, not only the Church at *Corinth* were blessed, but the Church of GOD, in all ages since, have been benefited, under the teaching of the Almighty Author of all scripture, GOD the HOLY GHOST. Oh! for ministers of the Spirit, and not of the letter, and the faithful in every true Church of JESUS to be taught from those holy scriptures, by the continual unction of the HOLY ONE, and to know all things? May it be the one language of the whole Church of GOD, in the common salutation of all saints: Brethren! the grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the love of GOD, and the communion of the HOLY GHOST, be with you all.

Amen.

THE EPISTLE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

TO THE

GALATIANS

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

GALATIA was a province of the lesser Asia. Here, the Lord had a people, whom he was pleased to call by sovereign grace; and principally, it should seem, under the personal ministry of the Apostle Paul. See, in confirmation, Acts 16:6. and 18:23. Galatians 1:8, 9. and chap. 4:13, &c. The church so formed, was made up, as might be expected, of a mixture of Jews and Gentiles. Hence they brought with them into the church their several distinct prejudices, according, to their former attachments. And this explains, in a great measure, certain expressions, here and there, which we meet with in this Epistle, in the apostle's teaching. But the leading feature of the whole, and for which *Paul* here wrote to the *Galatians*, *was*, to set forth the way of justification before God; which the apostle decidedly shows, under God the Spirit's inspiration, to be solely in, and by, the Lord Jesus Christ, without the smallest mixture of the law.

The *time* in which *Paul* wrote this Epistle is variously dated by different writers, Some make it as early as Anno 55: others, as late as 59, in the fifth year of the reign of *Nero*. The *place* also, where the Apostle, wrote it, is no less uncertain. For though in the close of it, the signature, is said to be from *Rome*, yet this doth not mean, that *Paul* wrote it there. However, these points are not material. The great object in which we are concerned is, the assurance that the writing is by the Holy Ghost. And the Lord's seal to this appears, in every Chapter. Indeed, the whole Epistle brings with it, what *Paul* calls the threefold witness; 2 Corinthians 13:1. God the Holy Ghost the Author: the sacred inspired word itself: and the heart of the child of God, in whom the truth of it is written.

I think it unnecessary to detain the Reader from immediately entering on the perusal of a Scripture, so sweet, and interesting; and shall only beg the Lord to direct and guide my heart and pen, in all that shall be offered upon it, in this *Poor Man's Commentary*; that both Writer and Reader may be refreshed to their soul's joy, and the Lord's glory, in the face of Jesus Christ. Amen.

CHAPTER 1

CONTENTS

Paul introduceth his Epistle, with a short Account of himself, and his Apostleship. He speaks of God's Love, in his Conversion: and awfully describes the State of those, who

preach any other Gospel, than what the Lord sent him to preach.

GALATIANS 1:1-5

(1) ¶ Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) (2) And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: (3) Grace *be* to you and peace from God the Father, and *from* our Lord Jesus Christ, (4) Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: (5) To whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

What a decisive testimony is here produced of *Paul's* commission and Apostleship? He did not run unsent. Neither did *Paul* receive his authority from any unauthorized to give it. Christ himself sent him; and God the Holy Ghost ordained him; and God the Father called him by his grace, verse 15. I beg the Reader to mark down, one by one, in the memorandums of his mind, what *Paul* here saith, on those most interesting points. *First*, he stiles himself an Apostle. *Secondly*, he shows his authority to the office. It was not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ. A most positive evidence to the Godhead of Christ. For if no man sent him, and yet Christ sent him; what can more fully prove *Paul's* firm persuasion, that Christ was, and is, God. And, *thirdly*, to show *Paul's* conviction of the oneness in the divine nature, as well as will and purpose in the divine Persons; he joins in the commission given him of his Apostleship, the authority of God the Father. And, *fourthly*; as none could properly be an Apostle, but such as could bear testimony to the resurrection of Christ from the dead (see Acts 1:21, 22.) *Paul* having received confirmation, both of Christ's resurrection, and ascension, at his conversion, when Jesus called to him from Heaven; the Apostle

introduceth the subject of Christ's, resurrection in this place, to show his qualification in that department also. Reader! you and I shall both do well, in often reviewing those evidences *Paul* here gives, to his Apostleship. It will help, through grace, to silence any and every objection, the carnal, and men untaught of God, bring to the writings of this great Apostle. Let *Paul's* character be but considered. Regenerated as he was, and then ordained by the Holy Ghost; Acts 13:1-5. and often blessed with the visions of God; (see Acts 16:6-14, 26. Acts 18:9, 10. 2 Corinthians 12:1, &c.) and the Lord's blessings over his ministry: yea, even at this hour, the continued testimonies the Lord bears to the word of his grace, by *Paul's* writings: of what avail ought the writings, or the preachings of any man, or men, to be considered, who plainly prove, that they were never regenerated themselves, nor ordained by the Holy Ghost to preach to others; and therefore, know not of the things which accompany salvation? Let these things be well considered; and they must tend, under grace, effectually to silence all the objections of the carnal, to the distinguishing doctrines, *Paul's* ministry was intended, by the Holy Ghost, to establish!

I pass over what the Apostle saith of the *brethren*, which joined him in his salutation of the Churches of *Galatia*. The grand feature of *Paul's* ministry is his preaching Christ. And it is such, both the Writer and the Reader of this *Poor Man's Commentary*, ought to have always in view. The Reader will therefore pardon me, if I dwell but little, on everything I meet with in the Apostolic writings, of men, or things, which have not, immediately, or indirectly, a reference; to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the whole sum and substance of

everything that is blessed. And the brethren of the Churches, yea, the Church herself, in all her glory, is only by so much made so, as she derives it from Christ. Reader! let you and I eye Him, as the one great object of every Chapter. And very sure we shall then be, to behold, at the same time, the Church's blessedness in Him; for she is always so in his view: and in him, will then be so in ours.

We must not pass away from this paragraph, before that we have first noticed, how sweetly *Paul*, upon every occasion, speaks of Jesus. *Who gave himself for our sins*, saith *Paul*. Yes! gave *himself*. It would have been an immense thing, had Christ given a world, or ten thousand worlds, for his Church. But to give himself, and that a sacrifice, for the sins of his people; this called up the more awakened astonishment of the Apostle. Hence that sweet prayer, for which he bent his knees continually, that the Church might be able to comprehend, somewhat *of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge*. Ephesians 3:14-19.

And, let not the Reader overlook, how beautifully *Paul* blends the love of God the Son with the love of God the Father. For he immediately adds, *according to the will of God our Father*. Indeed, whoever reads attentively, the Scripture relations of the divine love, will discover, how blessedly the whole Persons of the Godhead have concurred, and cooperated, in the manifestation of love to the Church. In the office-characters, the glorious Persons have graciously assumed, to make known their joint love to the Church; the highly favored objects of this unspeakable mercy, are led, (when under divine teaching,) to contemplate, with equal rapture, and delight; and to have their spirits going forth in equal ado-

ration, and thanks, to the whole Three in One, for their unspeakable grace. How precious is the love of God the Father, in his having *chosen the Church in Christ before the foundation of the world?* Ephesians 1:4. How precious the love of God the Son, in having *betrothed the Church unto himself forever?* Hosea 2:19. And, how precious the love of God the Holy Ghost, in his quickening the Church by regeneration, when *dead in trespasses and sins?* Ephesians 2:1. How infinitely great, and equally blessed, are each of those acts, in the demonstration of the divine love! Had God the Father not chosen the Church in Christ; how would the betrothing of the Church by Christ have been accomplished? Had God the Son not betrothed the Church to himself; how would the Church have been redeemed from the ruins of the fall, in the *Adam-nature*, in which she was involved, in the present time-state of her being? And, had God the Holy Ghost not regenerated the souls of the redeemed by his quickening grace, how would the Church have ever known, or felt, the electing love of God the Father; or the betrothing, and redeeming love of God the Son? But now by each glorious Person having in Covenant-offices fulfilled the Covenant engagements made with each other, in relation to the Church, the whole Church is made everlastingly blessed in Christ; and hath now in time, and will have to all eternity, cause to bless Jehovah, in his threefold character of Person, with equal adoration, love, and praise, for those united tokens of divine favor. *Oh! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom, and knowledge of God!* Well may every redeemed soul, conscious of these things, join the Apostle in his hymn of praise to Jehovah and which way well be supposed to include the whole Persons of the Godhead; *To whom be glory, for ever,*

and ever, Amen. To Him who gave himself! To Him who gave his Son! To Him who quickened the Church; *be glory, for ever, and ever. Amen.* Reader! can you join in this hymn of praise.

GALATIANS 1:6-12

(6)¶ I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: (7) Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. (8) But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. (9) As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. (10)¶ For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. (11) But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. (12) For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

I beg the Reader to observe, how *Paul* hath worded his expression, on God's call of his people: *Him that called you* (he saith) *into the grace of Christ*. Not Paul! not ministers, not angels! There is nothing of human strength, or even angelic power, noticed; no, not even as instruments. We cannot be too jealous over our own hearts, how we look to men as instruments, lest in them we overlook the Lord. *Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.* Zechariah 4:6. It is blessed to keep unmixed, everything from the hallowed work, which is wholly the Lord's. If God was so jealous in the *old Church*, that He would have the Altar made of earth; (for the earth is the Lord's, Psalm 24:1.) and if of stone, which is also the Lord's, not *hewn* stone; for the very lifting of the tool upon it, polluted it: Exodus 20:25. can we suppose, that in the *new Church*, under the Gospel, the Lord is less concerned

for his honor, *to give his glory to another, and his praise to graven images?* Isaiah 42:8. And is it not bordering upon this, when men talk of spiritual fathers, and begetting children to God, by their ministry?

Paul's surprise is strongly expressed, in noticing the backsliding of the *Galatians*. That it is backsliding, which he meant, by saying they were *removed* from Him that called them is very clear; because Him that called them, (meaning the Lord,) must have made it an effectual call, and including regeneration. So that, though they were removed, as to certain points of faith, (and as it should seem by what follows in this Epistle on the method of justification,) yet were they still real, and not nominal followers of the Lord. It is highly proper to notice this, for the comfort of the Church in all ages. Backsliding departures, and the like, very painful, and distressing as they are in themselves, and reproachful to God's people; yet they are consistent with the state of a truly regenerated child of God, The Church is described, in a cold, sleepy state, when Jesus called her; and even pleading excuses for not going to him, though she knew his voice. Song Of Solomon 5:2, 3. Oh! how certain it is, that we carry about with us a body of sin, and death, which often drags down the soul! Romans 7:18, &c.

I never can say enough to the Reader, in begging him to notice what *Paul* saith, of *another gospel*. Not that the Apostle allowed it to be called *another gospel*, for he immediately corrected himself, and said, it was not *another*; meaning, it was no gospel at all. And this was then, and is now, and always must be the case. For whatever is set up, different from *the faith once delivered to the saints*, ceaseth to be the

Gospel, by so much, as there is a departure, from that standard. The pure Gospel of Christ, reveals Jehovah, in his threefold character, as raising up a Church, for the divine glory in Christ: and this, before all worlds. And the whole Persons of the Godhead are represented in Scripture, as engaged in Covenant settlements, to make this Church everlastingly blessed, in Christ, and to all eternity. As such the Church had a Being given her in Christ, from the moment the Son of God stood up, at the call of the Father. And for the present time-state of the Church, foreviewed in the *Adam-fall* of nature, provision was made for her recovery, in a way, which should illustrate the divine glory, and give the Church a blessedness in Christ, to secure her from all future possibility of evil. In this plan, founded in infinite wisdom, and resulting from infinite love, Christ became the One, and the only One Ordinance of Jehovah; for *salvation is in no other*. And consequently, justification by Christ alone, was the true Gospel, preached to the *Galatians*. This the Apostle had set forth, and it was called the Gospel. And well might it be called so. For it proclaimed pardon, mercy, and peace, through the sole labors, sufferings, and death, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It appears, however, that through some means, of preachers, or others, the *Galatians* had been tempted to remove from this faith, unto what for the moment the Apostle called, though he allowed not the expression, *another* gospel. They still preached Christ as the Head, and thereby deceived the unwary; but they did not preach Christ as the *whole* of salvation. To the Jews (as should seem by what *Paul* said in another part of this Epistle, chap. 5:2, 3, 4.) they taught, that it was necessary to add *circumcision* to a faith in Christ; and

to the Gentiles they contended, that the *works of the law* were essential to salvation. (Chap. 4:21.)

Reader! let us pause over the state of the *Galatian* Church, for a moment; and see, whether there have not been Churches, as well as *in Galatia*, tinctured with this leaven. Yea, it may be well to enquire, whether the Church to which we belong, is altogether free from it. Chap: 5:9. *Paul's* account of himself, and of the freeness, and fullness of salvation, may serve as a standard, to form our conclusions, of what in his view was, and is, truly Gospel. *This is a faithful saying, (saith Paul,) and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.* 1 Timothy 1:15. And worthy of all acceptation it is, (for all stand in need of it,) if we have nothing to do but accept it, as a free gift, from free grace. But if it be clogged with doings, and workings of ours; if, with the merits, and blood-shedding of the Savior, there must be the minglings of the labors and merits of the sinner; if we are saved only in part, and we are to make up the deficiency in ourselves; if Christ hath only brought my poor soul into a salvable state, by procuring me favor to my sincere endeavors; and God's acceptance of me after all, will depend upon my tears, and repentance, and faith: this is no gospel, no glad tidings of good things, neither joy to all people; for sure I am, the whole Church of God, would be as certainly lost, in coming short of these things, as though Christ had not died; neither given his soul an offering for sin!

Reader! I beseech you to pause, again and again, over the important subject; for it is important. To talk of the sincerity of the heart in a man's best endeavors, when God, the searcher of hearts, declares, that *the heart is deceitful above*

all things, and desperately wicked; and that none but Himself can know it: Jeremiah 17:9. To talk of suspending the grace of God, and the merits of Christ in redemption, upon the endeavors of man; leaving the event at a peradventure, whether God's grace, or man's will, shall triumph: these things are not simply rendering matters uncertain; but totally making the whole blessings of the Gospel ineffectual. And, to call this *another* gospel, is a false name, as the Apostle saith; for it is no gospel at all. And, though the advocates of such doctrine, put Christ at the head of it, and seem to pay him the compliment, of calling him Savior, while robbing him of his glory, in not allowing him to be wholly so; yet such a religion is neither law nor Gospel, nor can it lay claim to either. It is not law, for the law pronounceth *a curse upon every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* See Deuteronomy 27:26. Galatians 3:10. James 2:10. And it is not *gospel*, for the Gospel saith, that *by grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.* Ephesians 2:8, 9. And very certain it is, according to Scripture testimony, that as to law, *all the world is become guilty before God.* Romans 3:19, And, but for Christ's interposition, in redeeming from the curse of the law, *every mouth must be stopped.* For, as the Apostle in this same Epistle saith; *if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.* Galatians 2:21.

The Reader ought not to wonder therefore, that *Paul* speaks so pointedly, against the awfulness of preaching such a doctrine. *If an angel from Heaven were to preach it, let him be accursed,* saith the Apostle. *Paul* doth not mean by this

expression, to suppose such a thing possible; and everyone knows that the thing is impossible. For when the birth of Christ was made known on earth, Angels of Heaven, ambitious to be the first preachers of the wonderful event, posted down with the glad tidings. So that if an host of angels were to come again, they would only preach the same. But, saith *Paul*, if you could suppose it possible, for an angel to come from Heaven, and preach any other gospel than that I have preached, let him be accursed. And the Apostle repeats it, that no one might suppose he spake it from the warmth of the moment, or from inadvertency. But, as *Paul* very properly adds, it is not I, that seek to please, or to persuade men, but it is God!

It were earnestly to be wished, that *Paul's* faithfulness and zeal, were more followed than it is. When we look round, and behold, in the present awful day of the Church, what a mixture, of law and gospel, grace and works, make up for the most part, what is called evangelical preaching; how much the creature is cried up, and the Person, glory, and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, put down; how men are taught to live upon themselves, and their attainments, instead of living upon the Lord Jesus Christ; we have cause to tremble for the eventual consequences. And, although it would be highly unbecoming, and improper, in any, unless inspired as *Paul* was, to pronounce the *Anathema* he pronounced; (see Commentary on 1 Corinthians 16:22.) yet this methinks I would do: wheresoever, and whensoever I hear the free will of man extolled, and the grace of God little regarded, I would do as holy men of old did, rent my garment, and pluck off my hair, in token of indignation, for

the foul ingratitude offered to my God. I would look up to God, and say in language like his, who fell down astonished at the mingling of the holy seed, in direct defiance of God's law: *O my God! I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the Heaven.* Ezra 9 throughout.

GALATIANS 1:13-24

(13) For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: (14) And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. (15) But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called *me* by his grace, (16) To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: (17) Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. (18) Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. (19) But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. (20) Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. (21) Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; (22) And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: (23) But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. (24) And they glorified God in me.

What a beautiful and affecting history the Apostle hath here given of himself. It is indeed but short, but it is strikingly interesting. He takes it up from the days of his unregeneracy; and makes no reserve, in describing the bitterness of his mind at that time, against the faith of Christ. *Paul* tells the *Galatians*, that they had heard of his conversation, when in the Jews' religion, how he had persecuted the infant Church

of Christ. Reader! it is a very high proof of a change of heart, when the soul looks back, and takes pleasure, in ascribing glory to God's grace; at the same time taking shame in acknowledging our own undeservings. And, in ministers, and preachers of the word, I believe nothing is so likely, under grace, to win souls to Christ, as by showing how the Lord first graciously wrought on our own.

Paul, having shown what he once was by nature, next proceeds to show, what he then was by grace. And he runs it up to the fountain-head of mercy, in declaring, that it was God's free grace, and nothing of his own deserving. *When it pleased God* (said he) *who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace to reveal his Son in me!* Reader! There is a set time to favor Zion! Psalm 102:13. And, it is blessed to behold, that He, who is the God in nature and in providence, is the same also in grace. He who separates from the womb of nature, did long before separate in the womb of eternity his chosen ones. And he who appoints the time of their birth in nature, hath marked their time in the new birth of grace. As it was by Christ, so it is by all the members of his mystical body. *When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son.* Galatians 4:4. And when the fullness of time is come, for the recovery of Christ's members from the *Adam*-nature of sin; God sends forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, whereby we cry *Abba* Father! So minutely doth the Lord attend to all the concerns of his people!

Reader! it is to rob our souls of comfort, when we rob Christ of glory. Oh! had we eyes to see, or hearts to contemplate, things as they are, we should not confine our thoughts respecting Christ, to the act of redemption. Redemption is but

part of His office-work. It is the Son of God's work, in his union with our nature, to reign in, and rule over, all the departments of nature, providence, grace, and glory. *He is the head over all things to the Church, which is his body: the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.* Ephesians 1:23. It will be well, if you and I can bear testimony to the same work of the Lord, in all the departments of it, as it concerns ourselves; and say, as *Paul* did: He who separated me from my mother's womb, hath called me by his grace!

I admire the Apostle's expression, in his account of a saving, and effectual call, when he terms it, *to reveal his Son in me.* He doth not say merely to me, but *in me.* Not simply opening to the Apostle's view who *Christ* is; neither showing to Paul his infinite fullness, and suitability: but *in him*; that is, giving the Apostle an apprehension of *Christ*, and Paul's right in him. Reader! do not hastily pass away from this distinguishing feature of personal grace. Many hear of *Christ*, and in this sense may be said to have an outward revelation *of him*; but Paul's was, and so must every child of *God's* be, an inward manifestation *in him.* Job, ages past, marked the vast difference, in his own experience, when he said: *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear.* Thus do thousands, and go no further. *But now* (saith Job) *mine eye seeth thee.* Similar to Paul: God revealed his *Son* in me. Here is the sweet mark of God's children. Job 42:5.

And, what makes this in-revelation so truly blessed, in distinction to all outward proclamations, is the assurance it brings with it, that all the Persons of the Godhead do graciously concur, and cooperate in this gifted mercy. God (saith Paul, meaning the Father,) *revealed his Son in me.* And it is God

the Son which reveals himself to his people, for so he promised; and so it is said: *in thy light shall we see light*. John 14:21. Psalm 36:9. For as the sun in nature, in his own light, gives light to the objects in nature: So the Sun of Righteousness, in grace, gives light from his own light, whereby we discover his divine light, shining in our souls. And no less, God *the Holy Ghost* becomes *a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him*: Ephesians 1:17. Indeed, all the knowledge we have of each Person of the Godhead, is *from each other, concerning each other, and by each other. No man hath seen God at any time. But the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him*. John 1:18. In like manner, it is said, *no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him*. Matthew 11:27. And Jesus, in promising the Holy Ghost, declared, that when He was come, he should make known both the Father and the Son to his people. At that day, (saith Christ,) *ye shall know, that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you*. John 14:20; Reader! what saith your heart's experience to these things? *Paul* here tells you; that at the time God, who separated him from his mother's womb, was pleased to call him by his grace; that then, he revealed his Son in him. Hath it been so with you? Depend upon it, he that separated in nature, is the same which sets apart in grace. Hath he so wrought in you? Have you seen, and do you now see, the glory of God as it relates to your own soul, in the face of Jesus Christ?

I must not, in a work of this kind, enlarge upon all the particulars, to which *Paul* refers in his history. But if the limits

of the *Poor Man's Commentary* would admit of it, many sweet subjects arise out of them. His authority to preach, his faithfulness in preaching, his abstractedness from all human teaching, and the glory the Churches gave to God, both for his wonderful conversion, and his call to the ministry; these would lead to very inprovable, and profitable discourse. But, having already swollen the observations on this Chapter beyond the usual length, I add no more.

REFLECTIONS

SWEET testimony to my Lord in the account here given by his servant, of his call to the Apostleship! No man could commission to the office, *Paul* knew. And it was *Paul's* joy to consider, that he neither received it from man, nor was called to it by man, but by God his Savior! Jesus! who miraculously called to him from Heaven, made him an Apostle, and sent him to preach his Gospel. Oh! precious testimony, both to *Paul's* Apostleship, and to *Paul's* preaching; and to the Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Reader! listen to what *Paul* hath here again related, of his original state of nature, and unregeneracy. Oh! who to all appearance, more unpromising, more unlikely to be called by sovereign grace, when breathing out threatenings, and slaughter, against the disciples of the Lord! Listen to what he hath said of the Lord's call to him! See what God can accomplish, on the stoutest hearts of sinners! Behold him preaching the pure, unadulterated Gospel, of the Lord Jesus Christ! Ask *Paul*, from whence the wonderful change? A Persecutor, Blasphemer, Injurious! And now behold him, preaching the faith which once he denied. What cannot God

accomplish? What will He not accomplish, to bring home his own to himself; and to rescue his whole Church from the hand of the enemy?

Reader! let you and I glorify God, in him, and for him, and for all the mercies and blessings the Church hath derived, and will derive from *Paul's* ministry, to the latest period of time. And, oh! for grace to keep always in remembrance, as the conclusion of all *Paul's* discourses, which he himself made, as the end, and consequence of his conversion: *For this cause, (said he,) I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them, which should hereafter believe on him, to life everlasting.*

CHAPTER 2

CONTENTS

The Apostle opens this Chapter, about his Visit to Jerusalem. And then enters upon the grand Subject of his whole Epistle, of the Method of Justification, solely in, and by Christ.

GALATIANS 2:1-5

(1)¶ Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with *me* also. (2) And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. (3) But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: (4) And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: (5) To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

I humbly conceive, that by the *fourteen* years, the Apostle here speaks of, he meant, from the date of his conversion. And it should seem to be the more probable, because he had just before in the preceding Chapter, been speaking of that wonderful event. So that it was warm upon his mind. And the revelation, which he saith he went up by, is meant to imply, that his going there, was neither by mission from the Church, nor from his own desire, but from some secret intimation from the Lord. No doubt, but that the Apostle, from living much in personal communion with Jesus, through the Spirit, found his mind not unfrequently directed in his movements from one place to another, and more especially in such as related. more immediately to the Church. Reader! is it not in some measure realizing heaven upon earth, when the children of God by faith are enabled to keep up constant fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ? And is not this the very design of all the Lord's communications to his people? 1 John 1:1-3. Revelation 3:20. Yea, is it not to the want of this, the soul is in leanness?

I beg the Reader to observe the manner of expression the Apostle useth, when speaking of the doctrine he preached. He calls that Gospel which he preached among the Gentiles. Not that he preached any other, than one, and the same Gospel, both to Jew and Gentile. But that he preached the pure Gospel, unmixed with the least shades of the Jewish ceremonies. Christ, and Christ alone, as Jehovah's salvation to the ends of the earth, was the whole sum, and substance, of *Paul's* preaching. What the Apostle determined in his preaching to the Church at *Corinth*, was the same to all

Churches; Jesus Christ *and him crucified*. He determined to know nothing beside. 1 Corinthians 2:2. Justification by Christ without the works of the law, made up the whole, both of *Paul's* preachings, and of his writings, as relating to the present time-state of the Church. And the title at the head of every Epistle, and the text, of every Sermon, this Chapter, in a single verse of it, would have suited. *I, through the law, (said Paul,) am dead to the law, that I might live unto God!* We shall find many occasions as we pass through this beautiful Epistle, to observe, how closely the Apostle stuck to this doctrine, and followed it up. No one point of the Gospel, did *Paul* more warmly contend for, or more clearly prove. And we have reason to bless the Holy Ghost, for raising up his servant to this ministry, and for directing the Apostle's mind, to, establish the great truth, so clearly as he hath done; in the proper apprehension of which, the Church is so highly concerned. But it will be sufficient for our present purpose to observe, that this was the Gospel he preached to the *Gentiles*; and in which there was no variation, from all his discourses.

What the Apostle speaks of *privately* preaching to Persons of reputation, means no other, I humbly conceive, than that, he familiarly discoursed upon the same subject, in the private conversation he held with those he visited, at their own houses, or in the walks he had with them; as what he discoursed upon, in the public congregation. Many of those whom the Lord had called by sovereign grace, were of Jewish extraction; and of consequence, they naturally had an attachment to the law of *Moses*, in which they had been educated. *Paul*, therefore, in private discourse, it is more than

probable, taught them more plainly, and familiarly, by answering questions which might arise out of discourse, than could have been done in public. And as he elsewhere, in another part of his Epistle expressed it, he taught them, that *in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.* Chap. 6:15.

And, perhaps, the Reader, if he be well acquainted with the state of the Church in the present day, yea, from his own experience it may be, will know, how difficult deep-rooted prejudices of nature, custom, and education, are, to be totally destroyed. I know, through grace, and from divine teaching, that Christ *is all and in all.* And, I am as fully persuaded, as if all the great truths of God were laid open before me now, as they will in that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed; that salvation is wholly *in Christ*, and wholly *from Christ*; and that the Church, in every individual member of the sacred body, can neither add *to*, nor take *from* the sovereign work, fulfilled, completed, and finished, as it hath been, by the Lord Jesus himself alone. I stand convinced, on the most palpable testimony of Scripture, that neither tears nor prayers, repentance, nor faith, *as procuring* causes, become the least atom, in obtaining this great salvation. I know these things in *theory*, as plain, and clear, as though written with a sun-beam; yet often do I detect myself in *practice*, taking a certain degree of greater, or less comfort, as *that prayer* hath been more fervently offered, or *this ordinance* more sweetly enjoyed. And yet, when the thing be rightly considered, what is this, but substituting *somewhat* in the room of Christ. To live simply upon Jesus, as the Head of his body the Church, the fullness that filleth all in all, is to make Him what Jehovah

hath made him to the Church; the head of all influence, and of all happiness: being made of God to all his people, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; that all glory may be not in what we feel, but what Christ is, and in the Lord.* 1 Corinthians 1:30, 31. But, if gracious, and truly regenerated souls; (for it is of such only that I am now speaking,) who profess to seek justification by Christ only, live more, or less comfortable, as they feel the workings of grace in their hearts; what is this, but by so much departing from the simplicity that is in Christ; and not as *Paul* speaks, *holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.* *Colossians 2:19.*

I hope that the Reader, through grace, will enter into the right apprehension of this statement. He will not then suppose, that I am speaking in the smallest degree slightly of the workings of grace in the soul. The gifts of the Holy Ghost, and the exercise of the heart in them, are precious things. And very blessed it is to enjoy them, and to be led by them, as handmaids unto the Lord Jesus. But grace and gifts are not Christ. And sweeter by far is it, to be led by God the Spirit to Jesus, empty, poor, and needy, and under a conscious leanness of soul, to cleave to Jesus for new supplies of spiritual blessings, than in the most lively actings of joy, to take comfort from *what we feel*, and in those seasons lose sight of *what Christ is*. Reader! depend upon it, that it is treading on the confines of danger, when our spirits are carried away with the rudiments of our own hearts, and not after Christ. *Colossians 2:8.*

We must not overlook what the Apostle hath observed concerning this *private preaching* of his, when he saith, that it was, lest by any mean *he should run, or had run, in vain*. *Paul* could not mean, that he had either any doubts, in relation to the truths he preached, or of his being sent by the Lord to preach them, or of his success in preaching, in all instances to whom the Lord sent him. The Lord had taught *Paul* himself, for he received it not from man, neither was taught it by man, but by Jesus Christ. Chap. 1:11, 12. And God the Holy Ghost had specially ordained him, when he sent him forth to the ministry. Acts 13:1-5. And the Lord had long borne testimony to the word of his grace by *Paul*. Acts 14:1-10. But when the Apostle speaks of running in vain, he meant, lest the people, from the temptation of the enemy, and the corruptions of their own minds, should take prejudice against the blessed doctrine he taught, of justification *in* Christ, and *by* Christ alone, as if it favored licentiousness. Reader! it is this clamor against the truth of God, Which hath been set up by *Satan* in all ages of the Church, and is, indeed, among the master-pieces of his devices. What multitudes are kept back by his policy, sometimes for years together, from even hearing the preachers of this free-grace salvation? And how many precious souls doth his diabolical craft cause to go lean, from day to day, under the same distressing apprehension? It is, indeed, the most dangerous of all his delusions, when he transforms himself into an angel of light. And when the temptation is dressed up, under such a specious covering, that to trust wholly in Christ, is opening the very flood-gates of sin; who, in the first face of this argument, would suspect that the supposed friendly caution came from hell? Reader! it is the blessedness of God's children, that though we are told by

Christ himself, such will be the temptations of the latter day trials, that, if it were possible, they would deceive even the very elect; yet, Jesus by the impossibility, limits the danger, they shall not. Matthew 24:24. Though *Satan doth* for a long time terrify the Lord's little ones, yet he shall not finally. Many, by his bugbear stratagems, do sometimes live in great poverty and leanness of soul, and in much fear. But here is their security: *All that the Father giveth me, (saith Christ,) shall come to me.* John 6:37. Sooner or later they must come. And Jesus sweetly adds: *They shall know the truth, and the truth shall make them free.* John 8:32.

I beg the Reader to notice *Paul's* expression, when he calls those *false brethren* who opposed him and his preaching. There is *a* sense, in which men professing the same name of Christian, may be called *brethren*, because they differ from *Jews* and *Mahometans*, who totally disown Christ. But they are false *brethren*, *who* though professing Christ, deny his Godhead. Modern manners taking place of ancient faith, have, indeed, endeavored to amalgamate things of opposite qualities, and to make *the iron and the clay to join.* Daniel 2:43. Hence men, as opposite in their creed as light and darkness, are now found to meet together, and smothering the real sentiments of their hearts, profess to be all cordially united in brotherly love, to promote religion through the earth. Their different views of Christ, the great Author of the Gospel, is considered by them as a *secondary* consideration; and whether they believe in his Godhead, or *do* not, the robbing the Son of God of his glory, in this first and highest of all possible concerns, *is* passed by, that the spread of religion, according to their different views, may not be obstructed by

such means! Such things were not known in the days of the Apostles! Nay, so much the reverse, that *John*, under the immediate direction of the Holy Ghost, said, and left it upon record, for a guide to the faithful in all ages, that *if there came unto you, (said John,) and bring not this doctrine, (namely, the doctrine of Christ, which hath both the Father and the Son,) receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.* 2 John 9, 10, 11. And *Paul*, under the same authority, commanded the Church *not to be unequally yoked.* Yea, the Apostle demands, *as a thing perfectly decided and incontrovertible, what part (saith he) hath he that believeth with an Infidel?* And the express command of God himself to the same amount is: *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you; and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.* 2 Corinthians 6:14, to the end.

The *false* brethren of *Paul's* days, to which he alludes, differed, in some shades, from those of modern times. They did not deny the Godhead of Christ, but they called in question, it should seem, the doctrine *Paul* taught of free grace, for he saith, they came in *privily to spy out the liberty which is in Christ Jesus.* By which, it is evident, they disliked the doctrine of justification by Christ alone, and endeavoured to bring the people into bondage, by teaching them to seek justification, in part, by their good works. Happy would it have been, for the peace and comfort of the Church, had such

characters been known only in the days of the Apostles. But their generation hath reached to the present hour! Let not the Reader, however, overlook an inspired Apostle's testimony concerning them. *Paul* calls them *false brethren!* And the fallacy of their doctrine may be clearly seen by a single illustration. Suppose a poor sinner under the awakenings of grace, and by the leadings of the Holy Ghost, from the conviction of sin, comes forth with the anxious question, *what must I do to be saved?* And, suppose, that instead of the immediate answer *Paul* gave to this same question, when put to him by the *Jailor* at *Philippi*, *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thine house;* Acts 26:30, 31. suppose, that a preacher should direct such an one to his repentings and reformings, to his amendments, and tears, and prayers, telling him to hope that Christ will do the rest, when he hath done his best? What a trifling would this be with an alarmed sinner under his soul distresses? And what could charity herself say of all such preachers, but as *Job* did of those pretended friends of his when they read to him such reproving lectures on his dunghill, *Miserable comforters are ye all!* Job 16:2. Oh! how sweet doth God the Spirit preach Christ in his fullness, completeness, and all-sufficiency, when he saith, *In the Lord shall all the seed of head be justified, and shall glory.* Isaiah 45:25. Reader! look to these things, for they are now.

GALATIANS 2:6-15

(6) But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed *to be somewhat* in conference added nothing to me: (7) But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as *the gospel* of the circumcision *was* unto Peter; (8) (For he that

wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) (9) And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we *should go* unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. (10) Only *they would* that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do. (11)¶ But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. (12) For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. (13) And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. (14) But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? (15) We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,

I do not think it necessary to swell the pages of the *Poor Man's Commentary* on the subject, (and which hath long since ceased, as well as all the parties of it,) concerning *Paul's* reprovng *Peter*. It should seem very clearly from the history, that *Paul's* doctrine, and *Peter's*, were both essentially, one and the same, on all the grand points of the Gospel. 1 Peter 1:5. They only differed, as to the indulgence *Peter* had shown to the *Gentiles*, in relation to common food. Since the Holy Ghost had taught *Peter* by the vision on the house top, (see Acts 10:9-16.) that there was nothing common or unclean which God had sanctified, *Peter* had no longer scrupled to eat with the *Gentiles*. But, when certain *Jews* came with *James*, fearing that these might take offence at this Christian liberty, in accommodation to their prejudices, the Apostle withdrew from them. Had *Peter* been more firm in this liberty, he would not have incurred the displeasure of *Paul*. But we learn from

it, that great men, and the greatest of men, are but men. No where can we look for perfection, but to the Lord Jesus. And sweetly hath the Holy Ghost caused the frailties of his saints to be recorded, purposely to teach the Church her own nothingness, in her best characters, and that all her excellency is alone in Christ.

GALATIANS 2:16-19

(16) Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. (17) But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. (18) For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. (19) For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

I beg the Reader to be very attentive to the statement, which God the Holy Ghost hath here made by his servant the Apostle, concerning the method of justification, and which, indeed, more or less, is the subject of this whole Epistle. And I beg the Reader's attention to it the more, because errors are continually discovered in the minds, even of the Lord's people, on this great point of the Gospel. Nothing this side eternity, can be as interesting, as for every child of God to know the sure ground of his acceptance with God in Christ. The smallest departure from truth, in this particular, may induce great confusion. And until that my soul is firmly established in an unshaken confidence of God's full justification in Christ, I shall not be prepared either for an appearance before God, in time, or in eternity.

Now the Apostle's account is short, and plain, and simple: *Knowing, (saith he,) that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ.* And the reason is evident. The law of God demands unsinning obedience. The least departure is a breach of the whole, and, consequently, the offender is subject to the full penalty of disobedience. *The soul that sinneth, it shall die. And as all mankind have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;* so, it must undeniably follow, that by the deeds of the law, can no flesh be justified in God's sight. This is a short, but it is a clear statement of what *Paul* saith, *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law.*

From the law, the Apostle turns to the Gospel. *We are justified by the faith of Jesus Christ.* Here *Paul* considers Christ as the sole justifying cause before God, of his Church and people. And on this truly scriptural ground. Christ as their Head, and Surety, and Representative, obeyed the whole precepts of the law, and suffered the whole penalty of the breaches of it by his death. Hence, as the Apostle sums it up in the next chapter, Christ *hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us.* Galatians 3:13. Here, therefore, there is as full a confirmation of redemption by Christ, as under the foregoing observation, there was a confirmation of being condemned by the law. And Christ's obedience and death, being set forth by God himself for a propitiation, nothing can be more plain and satisfactory, than that *we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of all our sins, according to the riches of his grace.* Ephesians 1:7.

And the way in which this obedience and blood-shedding of Christ becomes the cause of the justification of his people before God is, by virtue of their union with him, and their interest in him. Christ and his people, in the eye of God's righteous law, are one. Hence, what Christ did, is as if they had done it. What Christ, suffered, is as if they had suffered. For, as in all, Christ acted as; their Surety, and being accepted of God, yea, appointed by God in this high character, when he had performed all his Suretyship-offices, and God declared himself well pleased with him, both law and justice must discharge the original debtor, having come upon the Surety, and the debt having been fully paid. Both cannot pay, for, in that case, it would be doubly paid, which would be unjust. And, therefore, the Apostle's conclusion is correct. *Now, therefore, there can be no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* Romans 8:1.

And, lastly, to add no more. The soul's enjoyment of this blessed state of justification before God, solely in the Person, and by the redemption of Christ, becomes the right of every regenerated child of God, in all its bearings, and in all its branches, by faith. So *Paul* declares: *We are justified* (saith he) *by the faith of Christ*. Hence, though the whole work and glory is Christ's, yet the Church enjoys it by faith. We realize the blessed properties of the whole, by our faith in Him, and our dependence upon Him. So, that in the proportion that the Lord gives his people grace to act faith upon Christ, and his complete righteousness, which justifies freely, fully, satisfactorily; such more or less, will be *our joy and peace in*

believing, abounding in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. Romans 15:13.

It forms a blessed view to faith, to behold this complete remedy of God's own providing, for the recovery of the Church from sin, in this time-state of her being. And it is very blessed also, when by faith, we live in the enjoyment of it. Here we see the truth and sweetness of that blessed scripture, that Christ is set forth *a propitiation through faith in his blood.* Romans 3:25. And we see no less, under the same divine teaching, that as God hath set Christ, forth a propitiation, so the Church is accepted in him. Christ's righteousness, in the sight of God, is their righteousness, as being one with him. They are, indeed, One. And, hence, scripture declares, that Christ's righteousness is *unto all, and upon all that believe.* Romans 3:22. So that they are accounted holy in Christ's holiness, as if they had fulfilled all holiness in their own persons. Song Of Solomon 4:7. Ezekiel 16:14. Reader! do not dismiss the subject until through the Lord's teaching, you have found the blessedness of it in your own heart. And suffer me to add, that you never will enter into the complete and absolute enjoyment of it, before that the Lord hath made you bare, and stripped you of all, and every supposed quality in yourself, and in your own attainments. A man must see himself lost, before that he will ask for salvation. And Christ will never be precious, until sin is seen to be exceeding sinful. And no one will rightly esteem Christ's righteousness, while fancying he hath somewhat of his own to recommend him before God.

I cannot refrain from calling the Reader's attention one moment longer, to what the Apostle here saith, of being *dead*

to the law, that he might live unto God. If these words were not found in the Bible, and written by a man, under the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost, we should stand amazed at the Apostle's account of himself. *Dead to the law!* What was *Paul* lawless? Yes! indeed, if putting Christ in the place of the law be so. For, in fact, not only *Paul*, but every regenerated child of God is so, in respect to seeking principles of life, or justification from the law. Christ is the sole life of everyone who is regenerated. That soul cannot be living upon Christ, who makes any one law-work a part of justification. No man can be looking to Christ and the law together for life: if you are alive in Christ, like *Paul*, you are dead to the law. But so far is this from giving occasion to licentiousness, that the Holy Ghost declares it to be the only source of subduing sin. *If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.* Romans 8:13.

Some there are, however, from being untaught by the Spirit, and, consequently, unable to explain these things according to their creed, have ventured to interpret the Apostle's expression, as if, when *Paul* said he was dead to the law, he meant the *Ceremonial* law. But, unhappily for their cause, the Scriptures never make distinction between the *moral* and *ceremonial* law, when speaking on the subject. This distinction exists but in men's brains. And, wonderful to tell, after all the volumes which men, untaught of God, have written about the moral law, there is not such a word as *moral* or *ceremonial* in all the Bible. So, that while men of this complexion are wearying themselves for very vanity, their labors, are all foreign to Scripture, and serve only to prove, what (Must everlastingly be expected from the writings of

unawakened men,) that they know not God. 1 Corinthians 1:21.

As, therefore, the Scriptures of God, when speaking of the law, make no distinction, but plainly mean the whole law; so, when Paul tells the Church he is dead to the law, he also can be supposed to mean no other, than the whole of it. And, if the Apostle be allowed, (as every honest man should,) to explain his own meaning, his words in this place are in exact correspondence to all his other writings on the subject. Let the Reader consult what *Paul* hath said, 1 Corinthians 9:21. and Philipians 3:6-9. and then say, whether such blessed living upon Christ can be licentiousness. Let men call it so if they dare. Be it my happiness to have the same law-death and Spirit-life in Jesus. Time, or rather eternity will show with whom the truth is. Whether the bolstered pride of a poor, sinful man's fancied righteousness, or *the righteousness which is of God by faith?*

GALATIANS 2:20-21

(20) I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (21) I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

We have a most beautiful and blessed subject opened to us in those words. I only lament the shortness I must observe, in this work, in commenting on them. *Paul* being crucified with Christ, cannot be supposed to mean a bodily crucifixion, for the Apostle was not present, as far as we can learn, when Christ died on the cross. But the sense is *Paul*, as a member of Christ's mystical body, was represented by Christ in his

death. And in this sense, so was every individual of Christ's Church. Precisely the same as in *Adam's* transgression in the garden, I, and the whole race of mankind were involved with him, both in the sin and punishment. For, as it is said of *Levi*, that he was in the loins of his father *Abraham* when *Melchizedec* met him, and blessed him, (Hebrews 7:10.) so all the seed of *Adam* were in the loins of *Adam*, when our first father fell by transgression, and pulled down upon himself and his posterity the dreadful ruin. In like manner, all the spiritual seed of Christ were in the loins of Christ from everlasting, and, of consequence, interested in all the blessedness he hath procured for them. Hence, *Paul* might say, and every child of God may truly say the same, *I am crucified with Christ*. For Christ was not crucified as a private person, but as the public head and representative of his whole body the Church. So, that when he died *for* sin, in him they became dead *to* sin. His death became the spring of their life, for by his death he overcame death, and *by his stripes*, as the Prophet declared, *we are healed*. Isaiah 53:5.

And it is very blessed to behold how sweetly the scriptures follow up the subject, through all the several subsequent parts of it, from the cross to the crown. As the Church is crucified with Christ, so is she said *to be buried with him by baptism unto death*. Romans 6:3. And as buried with him, so *risen with him to newness of life*. *Colossians 2:12*. And as risen with him, so is she said to *sit together with him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*. Ephesians 2:6. And in Christ's entrance into heaven, he is expressly said to have entered there as *our forerunner, and to appear in the presence of God for us*. Hebrews 6:19, 20. and 9:24-28. So that in all, and

every department of Christ's offices, the Lord of life and glory is never considered in the Scriptures of eternal truth, as acting in a private capacity, but as the public head and representative of his people. *Paul* was therefore very correct, when he said, *I am crucified with Christ*. Reader! there is one point that You and I should attend to on this subject, which, if like *Paul*, we can subscribe to, as he could, will make it very blessed indeed. We both daily prove our descent from *Adam* by *generation*, for certain it is, that his blood and corruption run through our veins, and we too sadly feel the consequence of sin in the sorrows of it. The grand question is, can we as clearly prove our union with Christ by *regeneration*, in the sweet influences of his Holy Spirit, quickening us from dead works to a new life in Christ, and his righteousness? Sweet and precious testimony, when the Spirit thus witnesseth to our spirits, that *we are the children of God!*

But we must go further, for many more beauties are contained in this glorious Scripture. *Paul* saith, that he was not only crucified with Christ, but that he lived with him. And how contradictory soever this may appear to carnal men, they are among the plainest truths of God to those that are spiritual. A oneness with Christ the sole cause of all. This brings up after it all its blessedness. It is not a *natural*, but a *spiritual* life. *It is the Spirit that quickeneth; (saith Jesus himself,) the flesh profiteth nothing.* John 6:63. And hence *Paul* saith: *If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.* Romans 8:10. Regeneration makes no alteration on the flesh, but the spirit. There is nothing in the flesh made holy. And there is nothing in the spirit left unholy. Hence, *Paul* saith,

Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. Not life in *Paul*, but in Christ; yea; Christ living *in him*.

I entreat the Reader, attentively to observe the Apostle's words; and he will discover their beauty and order. *Paul* doth not say / live in Christ, but it is Christ which liveth in me. It is not first our interest in Christ, but Christ's interest *in us*, which is the source of all life and blessedness. Christ's right in us is the *cause*. Our right in him is the *effect*. *We love him because he first loved us*. And the Church lays her claim to Christ on this ground. *I am* (saith, she) *my beloved's*. And then she adds, *and my beloved mine*. Song Of Solomon 6:3. 1 John 4:19.

Neither is this all. The Apostle adds: *And the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*. Oh! what unnumbered and endless blessings are contained in these words. I can but just glance at them. Let the Reader, however, not fail to take notice how sweetly *Paul* chimes on the subject of faith. All his life is *in Christ, from Christ, by Christ*. And all his enjoyment of this life is by faith of the Son of God. Yes! it is by the lively actings of faith, that the Lord's people enjoy their high privileges in Christ. Observe, all is in Christ; yea, Christ himself is their all. But their joys in this life, will be more or less, as they are enabled to live upon Jesus. And, if the Reader will look a little more narrowly into the subject, he will discover, that both the life *in Christ*, and the faith *Paul* speaks of *from Christ*, are from one and the same. Perhaps I shall somewhat surprise the Reader at first, when I say, that faith is not an act of the child of God, no more than the life in Christ, which gives birth to that faith is. *Paul's* expression

warrants this conclusion. He saith, that the life he now lives in the flesh, (meaning his time-state in the body,) he lives by *the faith of the Son of God*. *Of* the Son of God, not *in* the Son of God. Whereas, if this faith was our act, though God's gift, it would not be *of* the Son of God, but *in*, or *upon*, the Son of God. And this is scriptural. For Christ is both the *Author*, and the *Finisher*, and the *Giver* of faith. Hebrews 12:2. Philippians 1:29. Therefore, faith is Christ's, act upon his people, which calls forth their life of faith upon him, and not first their act upon him. The life of faith, like all other life, is first a life of receiving. Incomings before outgoings. Air received before we breathe forth. The first is the *cause*, the last the *effect*. I hope the Reader will apprehend me. *Paul*, certainly, himself so distinguished, and both knew the difference, and enjoyed it, when he said, upon another occasion, to the Philippian Church, *I follow after*, (said *Paul*,) *if I may apprehend that, for which I also am apprehended of Christ Jesus*. Philippians 3:12. It is Christ's apprehension, or holding us up, which is the cause both of our safety and happiness, and not our apprehension of him. The child in the bosom finds security, not from clasping the fond mother's neck, but from being encircled in her arms. And in like manner, our safety ariseth, not from our faith, but from Christ's love. *The eternal God is thy refuge; and underneath are the everlasting arms*. Deuteronomy 33:27. Hence one of old, convinced of this, cried out to the Lord: *Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe; yea my delight shall be always in thy statutes*. Psalm 119:117.

I must not trespass: but I know not how to leave my meditation on this precious Scripture. There is a vast deal of the most lively act of faith, going forth upon the *Person* of the

Lord Jesus, when *Paul* said: *who loved me, and gave himself for me*. It is Christ himself which the Apostle so passionately hangs upon; and the consequences resulting from the Lord's love to him, he then enjoys. *Paul* views Christ the *cause*: and the giving himself for *Paul*, the *effect*. But who is competent to unfold, and explain, a thousandth part of what is contained in the bosom of this sweet Scripture, when considered, in the infinite dignity of the Person *loving*, and the unparalleled nature of the gift *bestowed*; together with the view of those, on whom he maketh that grace to shine? No powers of arithmetic can number the extent of that *love*; neither the value of that *gift*. The Church of God, while in grace here upon earth, may in silence muse on the boundless subject; and hereafter in glory, when with faculties ripened into perfection, the body of Christ will be more fully qualified, to contemplate it; but the full discovery of it, being in its very nature infinite, will never, to all eternity, be so completely unfolded, so as to say, the whole is seen. Oh! for Christ now to dwell in our hearts by faith, that being rooted, and grounded in love, *we may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth; and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; that we may be filled with all the fullness of God*. Ephesians 3:14 to the end.

I admire the Apostle's conclusion of the Chapter. It forms a strong appeal to the truth, after what he had before been speaking, of the Person, and glory of Christ, and the entire justification of his Church, by Himself, and his redemption-work. *I do not* (said he), *frustrate the grace of God*. No but, on the contrary, he gives all the glory, where alone it is due;

and magnifies the divine mercy, in *ascribing the whole to grace*. All, according to Paul's view of the subject, and under the teaching of God *the Holy Ghost, is to the praise of the glory of his grace who hath made the Church accepted in the beloved*. Ephesians 1:6. But it would be a miserable thing indeed, and sadly frustrating, and making void, the riches of God's grace, to join anything of the work of the creature, in whole, or in part, as in the least contributing to justification before God. *For if righteousness come by the law*: if any of the fallen race of Adam, could be supposed capable of working out for themselves a righteousness of their own; yea, could perform a single deed, or exercise a single thought of purity, to recommend themselves to the great searcher of hearts: in this case, it would set aside, the necessity of redemption. For this would at once show, that the creature hath a capability of somewhat, be that somewhat ever so little; and by improvement, more might then be expected from him. And then, the consequences which would follow, would be, that there could have been no cause for so great a sacrifice as God's dear Son. The blood of Christ might have been spared: and Christ (as Paul saith) is then dead in vain. Whereas, the decided, unalterable language of holy Scripture, on this point, is, that *without shedding, of blood there is no remission*. Hebrews 9:22. That it was in due time, Christ died for the ungodly. Romans 5:6. And that, *if one died for all, then were all dead*. 2 Corinthians 5:14. Oh! the foul ingratitude, in attempting to lessen the infinite importance of Christ's obedience and death, as the sole cause of salvation! Oh! the horrible presumption, in thereby impeaching both the wisdom, and love of God g, in the contrivance of such vast mercies! And, oh! thou dear Redeemer! what base returns,

are these to thee, and all thine agonies, and soul-travail, when men set up a righteousness of their own, to lessen thereby, the infinitely precious sacrifice of thyself on the cross, *whereby alone, thou hast perfected for ever them that are sanctified!* Reader will you bend your knee with mine, and with me beg of *God* that like Paul, we may be always able to say: I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

REFLECTIONS

READER! let us pass over every lesser consideration, of men, and things relating to the Apostles, and servants of Christ, to have our whole thoughts fixed and centered upon the Person of the Almighty Master. Precious Jesus! be thou the One glorious Object of all my meditation!

And, while I contemplate Christ on the cross, as *Paul* hath here set him forth; let me ask myself, whether like *Paul* I can say, I am crucified with him! Do I indeed know that Christ, in all his sufferings and death, was the Surety, Representative, and Head of his people? Was I, to all intents and purposes, in Him, represented by Him, and by his sufferings and death, in the name, and for his people, redeemed by Him; and the old man of sin, in my nature, crucified with him? And not only in the cross, but in his burial, resurrection, ascension, entrance into Heaven, and sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high; in all these, do I know Jesus as my representative? Did Christ buy out my redemption, on the cross? Am I buried with him by baptism, into death? Am I risen with him, by regeneration, through God the Holy Ghost; and do I see myself by faith sitting with Him, in heavenly places, in Christ

Jesus? Is He gone as my forerunner, to appear in the presence of God for me; and the life I now live in the flesh, do I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me? Oh! for grace, in lively exercise, to be always realizing my personal interest in Christ! And may it be my daily portion, under the gracious teachings of God the Holy Ghost, to know, that such is the infinite dignity of Christ's Person, and the infinite preciousness of his bloodshedding, and righteousness, that Jehovah is more honored, and glorified, by his obedience and death, than he is dishonored, by all the sins of his people, during the whole time-state of the Church on earth! Yes! thou dear Lord! I do see, through God the Spirit's teaching, that thou art everything that is blessed, to thy Church, and people; and like *Paul, I am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.*

CHAPTER 3

CONTENTS

The Apostle is still prosecuting the Subject of Justification solely in Christ. He sweetly speaks of the Mediator, and the Blessedness at being in Christ.

GALATIANS 3:1-5

(1)¶ O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? (2) This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (3) Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? (4) Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if *it be* yet in vain. (5) He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, *doeth he it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Let the Reader observe, that when *Paul* calls the *Galatians* foolish, the word is meant in no worse sense, than that of weakness in faith. The expression is like that of Christ, to his disciples, at *Emmaus*. Luke 24:25, In both cases, the persons spoken to were in grace; and, therefore, it differed wholly from the Scriptural sense of fool, such as Christ condemned: Matthew 5:22. See Commentary there. In that sense, and some others, the term evidently meant, *reprobate*. See Job. 28:28. with Isaiah 27:11. If the Reader hath my *Poor Man's Concordance* at hand, he may consult it, under the article *Rebel* for information, as to the difference in those terms. God's children are called *rebellious*, yea, the Lord calls them himself: Isaiah 30:1 and a *temporary* woe is pronounced upon them. But the Lord never calls them *rebels*; neither doth the Lord allow any other, to call them by that name, with impunity. See Numbers 20:10.

What rendered the conduct of those *Galatians* the more reprehensible was, that Christ had been so blessedly preached to them, in all his fullness, and all-sufficiency; as if they had in reality been present at all the great events, which attended his crucifixion, and death, at *Jerusalem*. And yet, with all those strong convictions on their minds, they were turning aside, from seeking justification, in a full, free grace in Christ, to take to them recommendations, by the deeds of the law. Reader! the smallest attention to the Apostle's statement, under grace, is enough to convince any man, of the folly and weakness of such conduct. Let a child of God, who is savingly called by sovereign grace, to the truth as it is in Jesus, ask his own heart, the same question. *Paul* asked those *Galatians*. How was the Spirit first received? For, as it was first received,

so most it be to the last. As I came to Christ, in the first moments of convictions under sin; so must I, at the very last, come to Him. For in myself I have no more to bring him *now*, than I had *then*, And as I came, under the reproaches, and condemnations of my own heart; so must I always come. And a blessed, and a sure way of coming it is, in which the divine glory, and the soul's safety, sweetly concur. And to live upon Christ, in the daily comfort of His Person, Blood, and Righteousness; in the free, sovereign grace, of an everlasting Covenant, *ordered in all things and sure*; what can give assured peace to *the* soul, like this?

GALATIANS 3:6-9

(6)¶ Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. (7) Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. (8) And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed. (9) So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

It was a very blessed plan, the Apostle here adopted, for the better confirmation of the doctrine he had in view, of proving, that justification is only in Christ when he adverted to the case of *Abraham*. For what was *Abraham*, when the Lord first called him? Without all doubt, an idolater; for the Lord called him from *Ur* of the *Chaldees*, who were heathens. And, that the Patriarch was at once justified by the Lord, is evident, for the Holy Ghost hath left it upon record, for the perpetual comfort of the Church, in all generations? that *the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham*. It must, therefore, undeniably follow that *Abraham*, at the time of his

justification, had not an atom of good works, to recommend him to God. Hence, in thy Patriarch's instance, as in all others of the Lord's people, it is all pure, free, unmerited grace.

And where was the merit of *Abraham's* belief in God? Was it not given him? And could that be the merit of man, which resulted wholly from the grace and gift of God? Moreover, it was not the faith of *Abraham*, which was imputed to him; but Christ's righteousness. God said: *in thee*, that is, *in thy seed*, meaning Christ, *shall all nations be blessed*. *Abraham* believed this, and it was accounted to him, (that is, Christ's righteousness, not *Abraham's* faith, was accounted to him,) for righteousness. God hath said: fear not, *Abraham! I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward*. Genesis 15:1. The Patriarch believed this. And, therefore, he beheld himself secured in the Lord's promise: Christ was *his shield*, and *exceeding great reward*. See Romans 4. and Commentary.

And the Reader will recollect, that all this took place, before that *Abraham* had wrought a single act of faith, or works. Circumcision had not at this time been even named. And when, in after days, the Lord was pleased to institute it in *Abraham's* family; the Holy Ghost expressly bears testimony, that *it was only a sign, and seal, of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised*. Romans 4:11. Reader! do not overlook, how sweetly, and satisfactorily, this paragraph closeth: All the faithful seed of *Abraham*, are blessed from the same cause with faithful *Abraham*.

GALATIANS 3:10-14

(10) For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

(11) But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is evident*: for, The just shall live by faith. (12) And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. (13) Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree: (14) That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Let the Reader, as he passeth over this paragraph, first notice the form of expression the Apostle useth, concerning the law. He doth not say, as many as were *born* under the law; for he himself was born under it, as well as multitudes of God's people, whom the Lord had brought out of it. Neither doth he say, as many as *live* according to the commandments of the law; for we read; that *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth* were both enabled, through grace, to do this. Luke 1:6. *Paul* doth not speak slightly of the law; for elsewhere he saith, *the law is good, if a man use it lawfully*. 1 Timothy 1:8. Romans 7:12. But the Apostle's expression is: *For as many as are of the works of the law*; that is, are looking to it, either in whole, or in part, for justification. All such, saith *Paul*, *are under the curse*; that is, are necessarily under the condemnation of it, because it universally condemns, every son and daughter of *Adam*: *for all have sinned and come short of it*. Romans 3:23. Deuteronomy 27:26. Reader! are you fully impressed, with this great, and most unquestionable truth? Romans 3:19. James 2:10. Such only are, whom God the Holy Ghost hath prepared, for receiving with holy joy, the soul-reviving Scripture, which the Apostle adds: Christ hath *redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us!*

I be the Reader to weigh well the statement of this passage; for it is most weighty, and precious. There are indeed *two* Scriptures, which in point of mystery, and in point of mercy, overwhelm the soul of every regenerated child of God, when he comes, under the Holy Ghost's teaching, to contemplate them in his mind. The one is, where Christ is said *to be made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. 2 Corinthians 5:21*, And the other is, what the Holy Ghost hath recorded in this place: Christ hath *redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*. Reader! behold them together, and ponder well the vast expressions. Christ, the holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, first made *sin*, and then a *curse!* He who knew no sin, made sin for us; that we, who know no righteousness, and literally have none, should be made the righteousness of God in him.

We shall enter into a clearer apprehension of the unspeakable mercy in this dispensation, if, under the Lord's teaching, we consider the Scripture-sense of *redemption*. The word is borrowed from an ancient, well-known custom, among men, of *buying off, or redeeming*, what is pledged by one man to another, by way of security. A man may be said to redeem a thing, when he buys it out. And, in case of want, if he gives an equivalent value for it. In the Jewish Church, the Lord himself appointed this method of redeeming, and no doubt with an eye to his own vast redemption of his Church. Leviticus 25:25. The mortgaged inheritance, became a striking resemblance, of our forfeited privileges. And what a redemption was that which Christ made, when to deliver us

from the curse, he himself was made a curse? And having, therefore, paid the fullest equivalent, yea, infinitely beyond all possible conception of greatness, as an equivalent for the debt; the law can have no further demands, the Principal, and Surety, cannot *both* pay. And the debt once paid, the prison doors Justice herself throws open; and the Lord's redeemed ones are free. Christ hath *once died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God*. 1 Peter 3:18. Zechariah 9:11. Isaiah 49:9.

GALATIANS 3:15-20

(15) Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though *it be* but a man's covenant, yet *if it be* confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. (16) Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. (17) And this I say, *that* the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. (18) For if the inheritance *be* of the law, *it is* no more of promise: but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise. (19)¶ Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. (20) Now a mediator is not *a mediator* of one, but God is one.

No form of words could have been more happily chosen, than what is here done, to show the unchangeable nature of the Covenant in itself; and to manifest at the same time, that it is all completed in Christ. The Covenant being from everlasting, partook of all properties suited to its everlasting nature; and as such, was *ordered in all things and sure*. And nothing could possibly arise, from which provision was not made. Consequently nothing could counteract the whole design. And when this Covenant was made and confirmed, by all the Persons of the Godhead; nothing could be added to, or taken

from. Even a man's covenant, (with *Paul*,) once stamped and sealed, is not to be rescinded. Now as the Almighty Covenanters engaged for all the parts of this Covenant, it is plain, that no respect was had either to the good works, or, to the evil works, of those, who were to be the highly favored objects of the bounty this Covenant promised. The Church of Christ, was considered as in need, of this rich mercy. And the Church of Christ had nothing to do, but to be the receiver of it. Jehovah, in his threefold character of Person, was neither constrained by the Church's deservings, nor restrained by her undeservings. All was of grace. And the whole result was all along intended, to be *to the praise of the glory, of His grace, who hath made the Church accepted in the Beloved.* Ephesians 1:6.

And, as the Covenant itself was, in its very nature, fixed, unalterable, and everlasting: so Christ, in whom the whole centered, and by whom the whole was to be accomplished, and who in fact was the whole of the Covenant, became the sole Security, on the part of his Church, for the fulfillment. *Now, to Abraham* (saith Paul) *and his seed, were the promises made:* (that is, were given, or deposited). *He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one: and to thy seed, which is Christ.* Nothing can more strongly define, both Christ, and his seed. For *Abraham*, had many children beside *Isaac*. But, in *Isaac* the line of grace ran. And to show at the same time, even in this line, that the children of promise were all of Christ; while, in the generations, from *Abraham* to Christ, all pointed to Christ: and the promised seed, Christ himself, came in with the fall. The very first promise of the Bible, proclaimed Christ: when it was said, *the seed of the woman.*

Genesis 3:15. And, without all question, or doubt in that holy portion of our nature, which the Son of God took into union with himself, was contained, all the spiritual seeds of holiness, from whence the nature of his Church should be formed; and become partaker with him, of all that she is capable of receiving, of grace here, and glory for ever. *He is the Head of his body the Church, the fullness of Him which filleth all in all* Ephesians 1:22, 23.

And, to confirm this point still more, the Apostle refers to the great distance in point of time, after which the law was given from that period, when God confirmed the Covenant to *Abraham*. *Four hundred and thirty years* ran out, before the law was heard of. And how, in the nature of things, could this be supposed, to counteract the Lord's original purposes, revealed to *Abraham*? And besides this, it was at least two thousand years, from the first, and original promise at the fall: yea, the Covenant itself, and all the promises, were in Christ, before the world began. Psalm 89:3. 1 Timothy 2:9. Titus 1:2. Reader! do not fail to observe these things! A Covenant formed between the Persons of the Godhead, from all eternity; formed *in* Christ, depending wholly for accomplishment *by* Christ, and all the blessings of it placed *with* Christ could have no respect to merit, or undeserving, in the objects of the proposed grace, either before, or after receiving the unspeakable mercy. For, as the Apostle elsewhere concludes; *if it be by grace, then is it no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace*. Romans 11:6.

And if, from this unanswerable, and conclusive reasoning, the question should arise in any man's mind, *wherefore then serveth the law*? The answer (saith Paul) is direct: *It was*

added because of transgressions, until Christ the seed should come. That is to show the heinousness of sin, and the holiness of God: and thereby more fully prove, the infinite importance of redemption by Christ. And nothing could so effectually manifest, the desperately wicked state of man's nature by the fall, as when held forth in the glass of God's holy law. For, precepts to holiness, act as a bridle upon our corrupt affections, and we thereby discover our propensities the stronger to offend: just as pent up waters, swell, and grow more violent, the more they are restrained. And hence the law was added, to show poor fallen man, the awful state, to which by sin he is reduced; and the more powerfully to show, the necessity of Christ. Reader! it would be always blessed, if men so viewed the holiness of God's law, and their total inability to perform it. Jesus, and his complete salvation, would then be valued, as the one only ordinance of heaven, whereby we must be saved.

On the subject which the Apostle next treats of, respecting *the law being ordained by Angels in the hand of a Mediator; I* am free to confess, that after the numberless times I have read this Scripture; I know not, whether my apprehension of the Apostle's meaning is correct. No Commentator that I have seen, hath afforded me any satisfaction upon it. And the greater part of their opinions I differ from. Under these circumstances, I shall venture to give the Reader what appears to me to be the most probable sense of the passage, without determining upon the correctness of it: and I pray God the Holy Ghost, to be the Teacher on this occasion, both of the Writer, and Reader, of this *Poor Man's Commentary*.

I see no difficulty, however, in apprehending what is said on the subject, in relation to the angels. They are no more than servants, or messengers, upon the occasion. And certainly, nothing can be intended by what is here observed, than that their services were used at the giving of the law. *Ordained* by angels, means not, that they had a hand in *forming*, or *framing*, the law. This was (and is expressly said to be) in the *hand of a Mediator*. The Apostle elsewhere useth a different word, to what he here names *ordained*; and saith, the word was *spoken* by angels. Hebrews 2:2. And *Stephen*, in his defence before the council, terms it, *disposition* of angels. Acts 7:53. The sense, therefore, is plainly this, and no more: that the Lord was pleased, as he did upon various other occasions to the Church, to make use of the services of angels, in ordaining, or speaking, or disposing; that is, delivering, the law. Hebrews 1:6. Genesis 32. John 1:51. Matthew 25:31, &c.

But the great difficulty, to the full, and clear apprehension of the passage, relates to the Person of the Mediator here spoken of. The question is, whom doth the Holy Ghost mean? The general opinion of Commentators, decidedly declare it to be *Moses*. But to me, I confess, nothing appears to be more improbable. For, not to remark, how unsuitable so high an office of dignity, must be, for the exercise of any, that is but merely man and no more; the terror, and apprehension of *Moses* at this scene of *Sinai*, totally disqualified him from it, had nothing beside been unfavorable to this opinion. And though some, to lessen the force of this objection, have observed, that *Moses* only acted here, as a type of Christ; yet this was altogether unnecessary, when, as is evident from

other Scriptures, Christ was himself present. And although *Moses*, as the servant, and minister of the Lord Jesus, went in, and out, before Christ's Church; (Deuteronomy 5:5-27.) yet no where through all the Bible is he ever called mediator. But, on the contrary, God the Holy Ghost tells the Church finally, and fully, by *Paul*, that *there is One Mediator* (and the very expression implies that there is no other) *between* God and *Men, the Man* Christ Jesus. 1 Timothy 5. See Commentary on the passage.

And moreover, on the supposition that *Moses* was here meant, *as* personating Christ; then, in this case, there was only one party present, at the delivery of the law, namely, God. And the Holy Ghost by *Paul* saith, that *a Mediator is not a Mediator of one*; for there must be *two* parties at least in every Covenant: for otherwise he cannot be called a mediator, where there is nothing to mediate, or come between. Whereas, if *Moses* be considered on this occasion as a mediator, where was the other party to form the Covenant? In this sense, I should be rather inclined to consider *Moses* as the representative of the Church, than a mediator, or the representative of *a* mediator; for then, both parties might be said to be present.

According, therefore, to every view which can be taken of the subject, we can look nowhere for this Mediator, but to the Lord Jesus Christ. And, although a difficulty seems to arise, (and who is there taught of God, but must expect continual difficulties to arise in our perception of divine things, in the present twilight of knowledge?) how Christ should be the Mediator, at the giving of the law, when the Holy Ghost declares him to be *the Mediator of a better Covenant*

established upon better promises: Hebrews 8:6. yet difficulties are less, in reconciling this apprehension of things together, than in the former. Though the law be called *the ministration of death*, when compared to the Gospel; and Christ himself is the source of life, to his people: yet the law is said to be *spiritual* also; and was intended to act spiritually in the Church, unto the coming of Christ. And, it should seem to be the more probable conclusion, that Christ is the Mediator on this occasion, in whose hand the law was ordained, than any other: though I beg it may be understood, that I presume not to speak the least decidedly upon the subject.

But the Reader will indulge me yet a little farther I hope, to bring before him a few more Scriptural testimonies (as they appear to me) in confirmation of it; and as the subject is in itself so highly interesting.

The Prophets who have noticed the solemn transaction, of the giving of the law, at Mount *Sinai*, appear to have uniformly considered Christ, as the manifested Jehovah, on this occasion. Thus the Psalmist: He first speaks of the Lord's *descension* on the Mount; and immediately connects with it his *ascension* when redemption-work was finished. And, that the Psalmist considered the splendid acts, to have been accomplished by one and the same Person, the smallest reference to the Scripture he hath given on the subject, will fully prove. See Psalm 68:17, 18. and *Poor Man's Commentary* there.

In like manner, the Prophet *Habakkuk*, when speaking of God, coming from *Teman*; and the Holy One, from Mount *Paran*: (*a well-known name of the Lord Jesus Christ*;) he connects the

subject of this glorious One, going before Israel in the Wilderness, with Him as one, and the same Person, which *went forth for the salvation of his people; even for salvation with his anointed ones.* (For so the words may be rendered.) See *Habakkuk* 3:3-13. compared *with: Micah* 5:2. and *Poor Man's Commentary* in both places.

And still further. It is worthy remark, that *Stephen*, when under the full influence of the Holy Ghost, as he stood before the *Sanhedrim*, expressly calls Christ, the Prophet foretold by *Moses*; and then as expressly added: *This is He that was in the Church in the Wilderness, with the Angel, which spoke to him in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, who received the lively Oracles to give unto us.* Acts 7:38. and *Commentary.* A plain proof, that *Stephen*, as well as the Prophets, considered Christ present at those solemn transactions, in the Mount.

And what should seem to be the fair, and probable conclusion, from the whole, in reference to this most interesting subject; (for I still beg it may be considered I am not speaking decidedly, but rather in a way of enquiry,) but that Christ, who in his office-character as Wisdom-Mediator, saith himself, that *he was set up from everlasting;* Proverbs 8:22. was, and is, the same in all ages of his Church, who hath come forth from the invisibility of the divine essence, to make known, all that can be made known, of the purpose, and will of God. In the early ages, by glorious manifestations of his divine presence. In the after days of his flesh, in open revelation. But in all, as the only visible Jehovah. Hence, all things are in his hand, as *in the hand of a Mediator.* He reveals the law, in the Shechinah glory before his incarnation.

He fulfills the law, in the days of his tabernacling among his people. And He was, and is, and will be, to all eternity, *the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*. Romans 10:4. And hence, so considered, we enter into some apprehension of that sweet, and precious Scripture of Christ himself; which seems, as far as we can at present judge, not to be explained in any other way. No *man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven; even the Son of Man, which is in heaven*. He who in his Covenant office and character, after redemption-work was finished, *ascended up to heaven*, is the same which *came down from heaven*; having stood up from everlasting in heaven, in the Covenant Council of chosen God-Man-Mediator: even *the Son of Man*; who in the same Covenant-character represented *is in heaven*. John 3:13. and Commentary there.

GALATIANS 3:21-29

(21) *Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.* (22) *But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.* (23) *But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.* (24) *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.* (25) *But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.* (26) *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.* (27) *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* (28) *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.* (29) *And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

What a very blessed account *Paul* here gives of the ministry of the law, and the end of it in Christ. If men, taught of God,

would consult those Scriptures, instead of carnal reasonings, they would discover, that the law, in its highest services, was never intended to higher usefulness in the Church, than as an hand-maid unto Christ. And I cannot enough admire the beautiful figure which the Apostle adopts, of a schoolmaster, when speaking of the law. For, in general, men of this profession, observe one firm, steady, and unshaken purpose, in their plan of discipline. A breach in their commands, is followed by punishment. And as a master, though demanding obedience, on penalty of correction: so, the law is sure to condemn all breaches, but affords no helps to obey. The universal decree which accompanies every precept, is: *do this, and thou shalt live. Cursed is every one which continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* Reader! is not this very blessedly preaching the necessity of Christ?

I detain the Reader a moment longer to observe, that when it is said at this verse, *the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ*; the words *to bring us unto* are not in the original Scripture. Neither, indeed ought they to have been in the translation. For although the imperious demands of the law, preacheth the necessity of Christ; yet the law never *bringeth* to Christ. This is the work of God alone to accomplish. And the drawings of the Father, and the teachings of the Spirit, are necessary to this great end! John 6:44, 45. and John 16:14.

What a very sweet, and blessed conclusion, is made of this Chapter, in relation to the whole family. All are said to be *children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*. Their sonship is defined by their characters in their original constitution, when

chosen in Christ and when betrothed to Christ, as well as when redeemed by Christ, and regenerated by God the Holy Ghost. And their baptism, is said to be *baptized into* Christ. Not outward ordinances, but inward grace. Not mere profession, but vital union. They are said to have *put on* Christ; not put on a name, but Christ: *by the washing of regeneration, and a renewing of the Holy Ghost shed on them abundantly through Jesus Christ our Lord*. Titus 3:5, 6. And, in this family alliance, all distinctions are lost, and done away. The Jew and the Greek, the bond and the free, are all one in the One glorious Head. For being proved to be Christ's, they thereby prove themselves to be *Abraham's* seed, and all equally included, in the privilege of children. Oh! the blessedness of being Christ's, and heirs according to the promise.

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Oh! the weakness of the *Galatians*, to be looking unto Christ only in part; and for a moment to fancy, that having began in the Spirit, they could be made perfect in the flesh. And is there no Church of Christ in the present hour, tainted with the same leaven? Nay, my soul! may'st thou not but too often detect thyself, in turning to somewhat of thine own, instead of living wholly upon Jesus. Oh! my foolish heart! what can prompt to the idea, or give the least encouragement, to look off from Christ, to look unto self, in any attainments. Lord Jesus! do thou help me to feel, my utter need of thee every moment, that to the last hour, I may come to Jesus, as I came the first hour; wholly wretched in myself, and altogether insolvent.

And, oh! the sweet thought to my soul: Under all the condemnation of the law, and the curses due to the breaches of it; Jesus is the Mediator, and the Fulfiller of the law, and the complete righteousness of his people. Be thou, my honored Lord, the glorious Head, and Husband, of thy whole family. Thou art indeed the all in all, to the whole seed of *Abraham; for in thee shall all thy people, in all nations, be blessed.*

CHAPTER 4

CONTENTS

The Apostle here represents the Church as in a State of Childhood, While under the Law: and as having attained Manhood, in Christ. Grace, and Nature, illustrated by an Allegory.

GALATIANS 4:1-3

(1)¶ Now I say, *That* the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; (2) But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. (3) Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

I pray the Reader, in the opening of this most blessed Chapter, to attend to the Apostle's beautiful description, of the right, and inheritance, of the Church; though, during the present time-state in which she is placed, it is no other than a state of childhood, and the minority of her being. Though a child, yet an heir, yea, an *heir of God, and joint heir with Christ*. Romans 8:17. Reader! it is blessed, yea, very blessed, to behold clearly, through divine teaching, that the Church

had a being in Christ of everlasting right, and security, in Jehovah's love, and appointment; before the world began. And that then, the whole, and every member of Christ's mystical body, was chosen to unspotted holiness in Christ, and absolute glory, notwithstanding the present fallen state; which was foreviewed, and provided for, in divine mercy. Oh! the unspeakable felicity, when at regeneration, these precious truths are opened to the view, of the heaven-born heir! We differ nothing indeed, from the whole race of *Adam*, in our sinful origin by nature, and are nothing but children of sin, and ignorance, until grace regenerates our nature. But when our relationship in Christ is discovered, what light and knowledge pours in upon the soul, when we learn, that this *is* not the first, and original state of the Church; neither is it the final, being begotten to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, *to an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that faded not away.* 1 Peter 1:3, 4.

The similitude of a school, is admirably chosen, to represent the tutorage of the law. And the bondage under the elements of the world; bears a strict connection also, with the discipline, of souls, under age. Men who are in the bondage of sin, or the bondage of the world; or the bondage of the law, which prescribes rules of life, but affords no help to obey them: strikingly show the awful state of unawakened nature, which sees indeed the holiness of the precept, but finds no power in nature to live up to it. Such is the rigor of the law, which takes every debtor by the throat with unrelenting severity, saying, *pay me that thou owest!* And, in point of failure, (as must be the case of every child of *Adam*,) nothing but bondage fears, and terror, follow; expecting with daily dread,

the correction which must come. Oh! the sad bondages of the elements of the world!

GALATIANS 4:4-7

(4) But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, (5) To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (6) And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

It is among the precious testimonies of divine teaching, that there *is a set time to favor Zion*. Psalm 102:13. And every child of God would do well, through grace, if he had the consciousness of it, always: in remembrance. In the ancient settlements of eternity, the coming of Christ, with the time *when*, the manner *how*, and every minute event connected with the vast administration, was arranged, with such infinite wisdom, as left no one circumstance to be added to, or taken from. The whole formed an everlasting Covenant, *ordered in all things and sure*. And how sweet is the assurance also, that to the whole Church, and every individual of Christ's mystical body, everything is equally settled, which relates to the present time-state of the Lord's people, from the first call of grace, until grace is finished in glory. It is here said, that when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son. And when the fullness of time is come, for the recovery of each child of God from the Adam-nature of the fall, God sends forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, whereby they are led to discover their high relationship in Christ, and to cry *Abba* Father!

There is an uncommon degree of beauty in the expression *the fullness of time*. No doubt a depth of wisdom in the

appointment, wherefore at that period rather than any other. But, as in the meridian of the sun's fullness in the heavens, the glorious luminary of the day, throws his light, and warmth, with equal strength, to the Eastern and Western hemisphere: so Christ the Sun of righteousness, in the fullness of time, sheds all the blessed influences of his rising to his Church, in every direction, to comprehend the whole of his people, as well before as after his manifestation among men. And the merits and efficacy of his redemption, reacheth from *sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth*. His blood, as from the high altar of his own divine nature descending, washeth away the sins of all his people. Reader! who shall calculate the infinite greatness of the work? Who shall form conceptions of the wisdom displayed in the arrangement of what is called the fullness of time?

But while I beg the Reader duly to ponder these things, I request him at the same time not to overlook the cause assigned, for which God is said to have sent forth the Spirit of his Son into the hearts of his people. *Because ye are sons*. Not to make them sons: but because they are so: being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Not to give them a relationship by which they might become children, for this they had before. But being children, they might now have the grace to know it, and to act accordingly. Ephesians 1:4, 5. Romans 8:29, 30. Reader! do not forget to mark this distinction in suited characters!

Men, untaught of the Holy Ghost, who know nothing of God's having *chosen* the Church in Christ; neither of Christ having *married* that Church, from the beginning; are easily led to invert the order of Scripture, and put that down as a *cause*,

which is wholly an *effect*. Hence also, persons of this description are easily led to conclude, that the children of God were once children of the devil, and, as the phrase is, were heirs of hell, before they were called, by grace. But all this is, because they know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God. Blessed be God things are totally the reverse. God's children were always his children, and never heirs of hell, or children of the devil: being *chosen* in Christ, and *given* to Christ, before the foundation of the world. 2 Timothy 1:9. John 17:2, 6, 14, 23. But in the present time-state of their being, born in the Adam-nature of a fallen race, they are all found when Christ comes to gather them, in the service of the devil, wearing his livery, doing his drudgery, and delighted in his work. All this totally differs from all relationship. For notwithstanding these things, when God, sends forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts; and that revelation teacheth them they are sons of God; instantly they run out of Satan's kingdom; and cry unto God, *Abba Father*.

And moreover, it is this sonship, and this everlasting relationship with Christ, for which all the blessings bestowed upon them during the whole of their time-state upon earth are given. Their redemption by Christ is not to make them sons, but they are redeemed because they are sons. Their regeneration by the Holy Ghost is not to make them children; but because they are children. This blessed scripture saith, and saith it with an emphasis not to be mistaken; *because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba Father*. And the consequence of all this is, *their covenant they had made with death is disannulled; and their agreement with hell cannot stand*. They are no more

servants; but discovered to be sons: they are no longer willing drudges to hell; but are found to be children of God, and as such, *heirs of God* through Christ. Isaiah 28:18. Reader! if the Lord the Holy Ghost be your teacher, you will see the preciousness of these things, and prize them accordingly. It may be you have heard the common phrase, of, children of the devil, and heirs of hell, when men have been speaking of God's children, and have been persuading in their way such *to flee from the wrath to come*. And so have I too, until I have trembled both at their ignorance and presumption. But had the Lord the Spirit been their Teacher, before they stood up in his service, they would have learnt this distinction, God's children, however rebellious children, were always, his children, and never for a moment heirs of hell. And those that are not God's children, but indeed heirs of hell, such they might have learnt from Christ himself, can never receive the truth, because they are so. For speaking *of such*, and *to such*, Jesus said, *Why do ye not understand my speech? even, because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He that is of God heareth God's words. Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.* John 8: 43-47.

GALATIANS 4:8-18

(7) Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. (8)¶ Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. (9) But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? (10) Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. (11) I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain. (12)¶ Brethren, I beseech you, be as I *am*; for I *am* as ye *are*: ye have not injured me at all. (13) Ye know how through infirmity of the

flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. (14) And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, *even* as Christ Jesus. (15) Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if *it had been* possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. (16) Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? (17)¶ They zealously affect you, *but* not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them. (18) But *it is* good to be zealously affected always in *a good thing*, and not only when I am present with you.

There will need no particular observations by way of Comment upon this paragraph. The subject is chiefly personal, in relation to the Church of *Galatia* at that time. We may remark indeed, that from what the Apostle saith, there was great leanness of soul among them.

GALATIANS 4:19

(19)¶ My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,

I pause over this verse, not so much to remark the tender reproof of *Paul*, to the *Galatians*, though his heart was grieved at their conduct; neither the soul-travail he speaks of, until their recovery was accomplished: but I pass over both these, to attend to an object of an infinitely higher nature. *Paul* here makes use of an expression, which demands our closest attention. He saith that his soul-travail was, until Christ *was formed in them*. We meet with a similar expression in his Epistle to the church of the *Colossians*; Christ *in you the hope of glory*. Colossians 1:27. And in his Epistle to *Ephesus* he there speaks somewhat more limited, but to the same purport, when he prayed that Christ *might dwell in their hearts by faith*. Ephesians 3:17.

I would not presume to be, wise above what is written; and therefore shall not attempt to explain what the Lord hath not done. But the indwelling of Christ, though not within our grasp to unfold, yet certainly is too important in itself, and in its consequences, to be passed over without suitable meditation. Every part of Scripture confirms the blessed truth, and brings testimony with it, that the union of Christ with his Church is personal. But who shall calculate the nature, or extent, of blessedness in it? Who shall say, what events are involved in it? When the Son of God dwelt in our world, it is said, that he *pleased not himself*. Romans 15:3. How must the contradiction of sinners against himself have operated upon his mind? Hebrews 12:3. If the soul of righteous Lot was vexed, day by day, with the filthy conversation of the wicked; what must the holy Jesus have felt, in his intercourse with the ungodly, in the days of his flesh? How must every sin of his redeemed, have gone to his heart? And what must it be now, in the numberless frailties of his children, when we consider Christ formed in the heart of his people? 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.

GALATIANS 4:20-31

(20) I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you. (21)¶ Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? (22) For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. (23) But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman *was* by promise. (24) Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. (25) For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. (26) But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. (27) For it is written, Rejoice, *thou* barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath

many more children than she which hath an husband. (28) Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. (29) But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him *that was born* after the Spirit, even so *it is* now. (30) Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. (31) So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

I have often admired, the very striking manner, in which the Apostle hath introduced the sweet subject, contained in the close of this Chapter. He calls the Church to the contemplation of the awful scene at Mount *Sinai*, in order to show them the terrors of the law, and to allure them the more affectionately, to the freedom of the Gospel. *Tell me*, (saith he,) *ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?* Do ye not see, how universally the law condemns every son and daughter of *Adam*? When you read the law, or when you hear it read, is not your very soul convulsed, in the apprehension of the tremendous consequences, which, out of Christ, must follow every breach of it? And can you, under such plain, and palpable convictions, be looking to it for justification, in any part of your conduct before God? Did *Moses* himself, *who* was present at the giving of it, say: *I exceedingly fear and quake!* Hebrews 12:21. And will you feel confident? The Apostle's manner, and appeal, is very striking!

But how blessedly he follows up his appeal, with the illustration of the doctrine, from the history of *Sarah* and *Hagar*? And how conclusive and satisfactory, is the whole subject made, by the illustration? Reader! I detain you at our entrance upon it, to remark, how gracious it was in God the

Holy Ghost, thus by his servant the Apostle, to give us so very beautiful an Allegory, for explaining the doctrine. No man upon earth, but for the Lord's thus instructing him, would have conceived, that the subject of *Abraham's* wife, and hand-maid, was allegorical. We should have read the history of *Sarah* and her *Isaac*, and *Hagar* and her *Ishmael*, for ever, without the smallest apprehension of such a thing. We should have thought it an interesting record, of the manners, and customs of the Patriarch; but for supposing it an Allegory, in allusion to the two Covenants, never would the human mind, untaught of God, have had the least conception. But as it is, through grace, we now behold in it, a most striking resemblance of what it was intended to prefigure. And, although it is possible, that *Abraham* himself, might not see it to the extent in which it really is; yet nothing, to an enlightened eye, can be more clear, than that it sets forth, the two distinct, and never-to-be-reconciled branches, of the carnal, and spiritual seed, of *Abraham*.

I will not detain the Reader with a long Commentary upon it, but only in a few of the more prominent parts. *Abraham had two sons*. Yes! he had many sons, beside those two: Genesis 25:1, 2. but those only typical in the subject here represented. And, to make the matter yet more striking, in allusion to those two sons, there was this difference between them: The son of the bond-woman was born according to the ordinary course of nature. But the son of the free-woman, was altogether by promise. For although the birth of *Isaac* was not miraculous; yet was it unusual. *Abraham*, and *Sarah*, speaking after the manner of men, were both passed the time of life, according to the established law of nature, to produce

children. And from hence, the Apostle takes occasion to show, how allegorical this was, of the Covenants: the Law of Works, like that of nature; and the Gospel of grace which was altogether a free gift. And the whole race of these different stocks, manifest the origin, from whence they spring. *Hagar*, the bond-woman's children, are said to gender unto bondage. They are everlastingly under the terror of a broken law; and yet, still look to good works to save them. *Sarah* the free-woman's children, are declared to be of the *Jerusalem* which is above, which is free, and the mother of the whole Church; and are therefore looking for justification only in Christ. Such are the different features, which this beautiful allegory describes, of the law of works, and the law of faith.

One point, and that an immense point, in respect to its importance, remains to be considered; namely, to which family do we belong? I have often thought, when looking over a large congregation, what a solemn consideration it is, that all these, I have said to myself, and if they were multiplied by as many millions more, must ultimately be divided under two classes only; namely, the children of the bond-woman, and the children of the free. Under one or other all of these must every soul be classed. But, oh! the vast difference! To which do *I belong?* Reader! to which do *you?* Who can answer? The question is easily answered, by regeneration. A soul new born in Christ, is thereby manifested to be the child of the free woman, the heir of the promise. *Now we brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise!* And hence, *because ye are sons*, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your heart, crying, *Abba*, Father! This is the infallible testimony. All short of this, is short of all. We read in Scripture, of some falling

away who are said to be once enlightened, and had tasted the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost. Hebrews 6:4. But all these are were outward things. Enlightened, in head-knowledge, not heart-renewing. They tasted, but not relished, the doctrines of salvation alone in Christ. Were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, in the ministry of the word, and ordinances; but no saving work on the soul. In all these things, there's not a word of being born again; and this is the grand discriminating feature, to mark the family-feature of the children of promise. Reader! Let nothing short of this, satisfy your mind, in ascertaining the family to which you belong. Oh! the sweet testimony, which *Paul* elsewhere gives, to this assured estate of safety. *Not by works of righteousness* (saith he) *which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through JESUS Christ our Savior: that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.* Titus 3:5, 6, 7.

REFLECTIONS

READER! what a blessed thing it is, when an heir of God in Christ is got out of the tutorage of a bondage state, and is brought into the liberty, wherewith the Lord makes his people free? And what an unspeakable blessing it is, that God, in testimony of his children's sonship-character, should send forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying, *Abba*, Father!

And, Reader! as the privilege is immense, if it be your happiness to know it so, oh! see to it, that you live up to it.

Thou art no more a servant. A child of God is an heir of God, through Christ. Live suitably to your heirship. It is all *in* Christ, all *from* Christ, all *by* Christ; and therefore, let God in Christ have all the glory. And remember, you are not living in the family as an hired servant: You are not the son of the bond-woman. Shortly the time will come, when the bond-woman, and her son, will be cast out. *For the servant abideth not in the house for ever. But the Son abideth ever.* And, if the Son hath made you free, *you shall be free indeed!* Oh! the blessedness of this freedom! Oh! the unspeakable mercy, of being born of God! Now, brethren, we, as *Isaac* was, may all such say, *are the children of promise.*

CHAPTER 5

CONTENTS

The Apostle makes some very sweet Conclusions in this Chapter, from the Doctrine he had established, in the former. Towards the Conclusion, he draws a striking Contrast, between the Works of the Flesh, and the Fruits of the Spirit.

GALATIANS 5:1-4

(1)¶ Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. (2) Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. (3) For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. (4) Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

I admire the manner, in which *Paul* exhorts the Church to stand firm in Christ, after having so fully proved, in the

foregoing Chapters, the complete, and blessed justification of the Church in Christ, as perfectly detached from, and unconnected with any, and every law-work, before God. The liberty *Paul* speaks of, is the perfect, and complete freedom, Christ hath by himself attained; for his whole Church and People, by his obedience, blood-shedding, and death. He hath, as the great Head, Surety, and Husband of his people, redeemed them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them. And therefore, as the Apostle saith elsewhere; *the law of the Spirit of life in Christ JESUS hath made every child of God free, from the law of sin and death.* Romans 8:2.

Reader! pause over the sweet subject of liberty in Christ, for it is sweet. Christ is the Church's Husband, Head, and Surety. And as such, hath answered every demand of law. Christ also hath paid every penalty, for every breach of the law, by his death. Hence, both law and justice are satisfied; and the Lord hath brought the prisoners out of captivity, as the everlasting Covenant agreed for. Isaiah 49:8, 9. The whole Church of God, therefore, and every individual soul of that Church, is delivered from the curse of the law; from guilt, from sin, from the accusations of Satan, the alarms of conscience, unbelief, and all the whole train of evils, of a fallen state. And it is the privilege of all the Church of God, to behold themselves in Christ, perfectly holy in him. For Christ and his Church being One, what Christ is in God's sight, so must the Church be. And, as God hath declared himself well pleased in him, the Church is included in this view; and is *holy and without blame before him in love.* Oh! the blessedness of an union, and oneness with Christ!

But Reader! while called upon to stand fast in this liberty, wherewith Christ hath made all his people free, and never more to seek the smallest recommendation from the works of the law; let no child of God be tempted to make a mistake in his expectations, concerning this liberty. Every child of God, regenerated by the Holy Ghost, is fully, freely, and completely holy in Christ before God, and everlastingly accepted in him: nevertheless, as he still carries about with him a body of sin, and death, which is altogether unholy, and virtually all that is evil; he must not be surprised, that he is still the subject of sin, in his flesh. He will feel the assaults of sin, he will groan under them: he will find, that *often when he would do good, evil is present with him*. Jesus hath freed him from all the condemnation of sin, but not from the sorrows of it. Jesus hath conquered sin, death, hell, and the grave: but yet his people shall know, and feel, by the body of sin they still wear, as long as they are in this time-state, the dreadful evil of sin, by the effects; the awful terrors of Satan, by his fiery darts; and the tremendous prospects which are in death, and hell, and the grave, had not Jesus destroyed their everlasting power, by his victory over all. Oh! the unspeakable blessedness of the liberty, wherewith Christ hath made his people free! Precious Lord Jesus! it is said by thy servant the Apostle, that *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*: 2 Corinthians 3:17. Oh! then, ever give to my poor soul this liberty; that as thou hast set me free from the law of sin and death, and loosed my bands, I may daily, hourly, minutely, have liberty of access, to thy pardon-office, and throne of grace; *and rejoice in hope of the glory of God*! Romans 5:1-5.

I wish it were perfectly understood, by men professing the great truths of the Gospel, that what *Paul* here saith of circumcision, is equally applicable to any, and to everything, which may be attempted to be joined with Christ, for salvation. Circumcision was a solemn ordinance of God. But it evidently pointed to Christ, and in Christ was completed. The observance of circumcision, after Christ had fulfilled the whole law, and by his death done away all the penal effects of the law; was, to all intents and purposes, saying, that Christ had not fulfilled the law; neither was his death effectual for salvation, without some additions. But, if the submitting to the rite of circumcision implied this; so doth every other thing, which men join with Christ, as in their view, essential to salvation. And yet, what multitudes are there, and even in what are called Gospel churches, where they mingle up a variety of other things, which unhumbed pride, or weakness, and ignorance, prompt men to substitute, to join with the Lord Jesus, as so many means of salvation. Alas! how fully do all such testify their total unacquaintedness, with the plague of their own heart? And yet if possible, much worse; how ignorant must they be, of the Person, glory, and infinitely precious merits, of the blood-shedding, and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ!

I only detain the Reader in this place to remark, on what the Apostle saith, of *falling from grace*, that this hath no respect whatever, to the childish idea of some men, who would insinuate the possibility of falling from grace. The Apostle is here speaking of the falling from the profession of faith only, in Christ. *Paul* had been uniformly teaching the Church of *Galatia* of justification only in Christ. There was some of the

hearers of these grand truths, nominal Christians only, who sought to the law for justification; and probably there were some others, truly regenerated, who leaned rather to the mingling system, of Law and Gospel, as hath been in all ages. Now, saith *Paul* to all such, whoever are justified (or suppose themselves to be justified, for it can be but supposition,) by the law; the grace in Jesus, ye are fallen from. But what hath this to do with the grace of God's elect? If, on this passage, and every other to be met with in the Bible, men would try it by this unerring standard, the decision must be infallible. The new-birth, or regeneration, is the only criterion of grace. No man, but he that is born again, can be said to be a partaker in grace. Everything short of the new-birth, is short of all. And, therefore, this, and this only, becomes the grand conclusion. Is the man born again? If so, he cannot fall from grace. For the Holy Ghost saith, by *Peter*, he is thereby made *a partaker of the divine nature*. 2 Peter 1:4. And it were little short of blasphemy to say, that he that is made a partaker of the divine nature, can fall away, and lose that spiritual life, which can never die. 1 Peter 1:23. But there may, and the Lord only knoweth how often there is, great flaming professions, much zeal in appearance, for converting the world, by men unconverted themselves. And therefore, when such blazing Comets disappear, and go out in darkness, the world which behold, call this falling from grace, concerning men who never were in grace. Those hypocrites *Paul* hath noticed, Hebrews 6:4, 5, 6. were of this description. There is not a word said in this passage, amidst much *outside* godliness, of any *inward* grace. Not a syllable to intimate, that the work of God the Holy Ghost, had passed upon either of their hearts, by regeneration. So that, let the Reader be always on the

lookout for the *new-birth* in all high professions, void of vital godliness, and he will be sure to discover, as fire manifests tinsel from pure gold, that this blessed discriminating work of God, hath never passed upon persons of this complexion. See Hebrews 6. and Commentary.

GALATIANS 5:5

(5) For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

I detain the Reader at this verse, just to make a short remark. The waiting for the Spirit to make manifest Christ's righteousness to the soul of the believer, is a beautiful testimony of God the Holy Ghost's grace, upon this occasion. I hardly know a passage in the Bible, which so blessedly, and fully makes known, this great office-work of the Holy Ghost. It appears then most decidedly from hence, that until God the Holy Ghost, by this his special act, hath fixed our minds upon Christ's Person and righteousness, so as to make us completely satisfied with both; and that we have done with every other method of justification, and are delighted with this, as God himself is delighted: the full consent of soul is not obtained. But when God the Spirit, who keeps us *in waiting* for it, and at length makes it known; we then rest with full assurance of faith, and *rejoice in hope of the glory of God*. Reader! do you enter with my soul, into an apprehension of this precious, precious work, of God the Holy Ghost? Oh! then, think how sweetly the words and promise of Jesus are here, as in a thousand other instances fulfilled, when he said of the blessed Spirit: *he shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you*. John 16:14.

GALATIANS 5:6-15

(6) For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. (7) Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? (8) This persuasion *cometh* not of him that calleth you. (9) A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. (10) I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be. (11) And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased. (12) I would they were even cut off which trouble you. (13)¶ For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. (14) For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (15) But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

Great part of what is here said, hath particular respect to the Church of *Galatia*, for the time then being. On these subjects, I always use shortness. And the many passages, here and there interspersed in this paragraph, are so plain as to need no comment.

GALATIANS 5:16-18

(16) *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. (17) For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. (18) But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

The Apostle hath very blessedly shown, within the compass of those few verses, what in all the other parts of his writing, when discoursing on the same subject, he hath most completely proved; namely, that when from the *Adam*-nature of the fall, a child of God is regenerated, and born again; the two natures of spirit, and flesh, do manifest themselves in this man, as plainly, as any two opposite, principles in nature,

such as fire and water, light and darkness, good and evil. So that, while the child of God walks in the spirit, the lusts of the flesh are kept under: and, on the other hand, the reverse will be the consequence, where restraining grace doth not keep under, the clamorous demands of the flesh.

The general idea of a *partial* regeneration, both of soul and body, on the new-birth of a believer, is totally done away, by what God the Holy Ghost here speaks by the Apostle. And, if men would but take Scripture simply as it is, and not bring it by partial quotations, to suit any favorite opinion they themselves have adopted, they would be led, under divine teaching, from such plain words as *Paul* here useth, to see the truth, that the truth might make them free.

Here are brought into one view, flesh and spirit: the old man unrenewed, and the new man created in Christ Jesus. They are here said to be in direct opposition to each other. The flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. And this to such a degree, that each finds the opposition. I pray the Reader, (and especially if conscious of his regeneration,) to remark this. For while every child of God who is regenerated, knows daily, to his sorrow, that his flesh is making everlasting war against his spirit, so that he cannot do the things he would; he ought to take the comfort from what the other side of the subject as plainly, and as fully brings, that through grace, the oppositions his renewed nature makes to the wishes of the flesh, prevents many times the gratification. So that by the way, (and I mention it on this account,) the child of God ought to take the comfort of it, and give God the glory, that the spirit hath its seasons of

conquering also against the flesh; while he often mourns at the triumphs of the flesh over the spirit.

It is the language of Jesus himself, that what is *born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit, is spirit*. John 3:6. There is no work wrought by the Spirit on the flesh. It is the same as it was when born, and so remains till it returns to its original dust. For it is then, sown a *natural* body. 1 Corinthians 15:44. Whereas, if it were renewed, or as some speak, in *part* renewed; that part, however small, or great, would be by so much spiritual. And how then could it become liable to corruption, and be sown at death a *natural* body? Moreover, the Apostle speaking of himself many a year after his conversion, that is, after his regeneration, declared, that *in him, that is, in his flesh dwelled no good thing*. Romans 7:18. A thing impossible to have said, if any part of his body had been regenerated. And on what ground could the Apostle talk of changing at the coming of Christ the *vile body* of himself, and the Lord's people, if God the Holy Ghost had, though but in part, taken away that vileness? Philippians 3:21. How much more agreeable to Scripture, to experience, and to the uniform confession of the faithful, as to the indwelling sin of the body, is it to suppose, that at regeneration, the spirit only is renewed, and the flesh remains unchanged: that while the Lord the Holy Ghost makes the spirit, which before was *dead in trespasses and sins*, perfectly alive in Christ, and as holy in Christ as it ever will be; the body still remains as carnal as ever, and will so remain, until after being sown in corruption at death: *in the resurrection, this corruption will put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality?* Reader! do

not the everlasting struggles of flesh and spirit in the holiest of men, give in their united testimony, to these things?

GALATIANS 5:19-26

(19) Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, (20) Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, (21) Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, (23) Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (24) And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. (25) If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (26) Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

The great improvement, as appears to me to be intended by the Holy Ghost, from this relation, of the different properties of flesh and spirit, is from them to consider, the different sources from whence they spring, and the cause, why they mark the different characters in which they appear. Let the Reader carefully observe, how the different expressions are worded. The one is called, *the works of the flesh*. The other, *the fruits of the Spirit*. In both instances, they are intended, to describe, what is, and must be, the result of the opposite state of unrenewed nature, and that which is quickened by grace. But the great object (if I do not err) intended, is to lead the child of God to trace effects to their cause, by beholding the distinguishing love of the Lord in the appointment.

The Reader will bear with me, while I say, that those sweet portions of Scripture, which mark the difference, *between him*

that serveth God, and him that serveth him not; are not properly used by the Lord's people, when looked at chiefly as our *evidences*, instead of being looked at as God's *testimonies* in Christ. It is not what we observe, or suppose that we observe, of *fruits*, and *effects*, which become the foundation of hope; but what Christ is, as our Head, and Representative in God's esteem. Experiences, are very well in their way; but they are never well, nor ever properly in the way, when we put them in Christ's way, and in the place of Christ. And whoever sends men to form a judgment of their state, as they stand before God, by consulting what they call the gracious dispositions of their own hearts, instead of sending them to the enjoyment of God's perfect approbation of the Church in Christ; is sending them to the shadow instead of the substance: so that, when at any time an intervention takes place to the substance, the shadow is instantly lost.

To make application of this doctrine, to the present statement of the Apostle. He gives the Church an awful catalogue of the lusts of the flesh, in the state and circumstances of every unregenerate man, born in the *Adam*-nature of original corruption, and remaining in it, uncalled, unsanctified by grace. These works he describes, are as naturally the production of our fallen state, as the sparks which fly upward from fire. They do not appear in equal violence in all, no more than the natural diseases of the body. But the root of each is in all; and proves an equal state of corruption in all. And, consequently, living, and dying in this unrenewed state before God; such characters cannot, as the Apostle decidedly speaks, *inherit the kingdom of God*. And the reason is obvious. All causes, must produce their own effect. And this is the natural

effect of such a cause. And, awful as it is, when we see men sitting under the Gospel, and yet living regardless of all the truths they hear, while it serves to enhance to the Church the sovereignty of God's grace, it manifests no less the impossibility of anything rising above its source. *The works of the flesh are manifest.* They prove the state of an unrenewed nature. And men left in this state, are only left to the fruit of their own works. The cause here, as in every other instance, naturally produceth its own effect. *He that soweth to the flesh, will of the flesh reap corruption.* Galatians 6:8.

On the other hand, *the fruits of the Spirit*; these as plainly are the result of an opposite principle: and they define the character of those born of God. But they differ widely from the works of the flesh, not only in their very nature and property, but also in their source and spring. The works of the flesh are a man's own. They arise from himself, and his own fallen nature. But the Apostle words his expression, when describing the productions of the Spirit, by calling them *fruits*. Hence, therefore, the child of God, though by distinguishing grace, he is made a partaker of the unspeakable gift; yet there is nothing of his, which he can call his own, in it. It is all received; and all free, unmerited, and on his part wholly undeserved. And hence, (to return to the original observation which I offered,) the child of God who looks at those fruits, more than as fruits, and overlooks the *cause* in the effect, taking comfort from evidences, instead of Christ alone; is by so much going off the ground, of real firmness in the faith. It is looking at Christ second-hand, when we look at him through our evidences. It is like what *Paul* elsewhere calls *rudiments of the world*; for they are rudiments of our out

hearts, and not Christ. Colossians 2:8. In a word, it is very blessed to trace the fruits of the Spirit as the Apostle hath here described them, in our daily walk and conversation: but all these, and ten thousand more, are not Christ. Precious Lord Jesus! thou alone art my portion, for time, and for eternity!

REFLECTIONS

SWEET are the properties of a justified state in Christ. Lord! I would say, give me grace to stand fast in it. There is nothing changeable in my Lord. His Person, his love, his righteousness, his blood-shedding, his complete salvation; these are all the same; without shadow of turning. And wherefore then, should I turn aside and seek comfort elsewhere? Shall I not live upon Jesus? Shall ordinances, circumcision, or uncircumcision, prayers or tears, experience or unbelief, toss my soul about, as if righteousness came by the law? Oh! thou dear Lord! with these or without these, in means or without means, may I everlastingly know thee, live upon thee, rejoice in thee, as the Lord my righteousness!

And, oh! thou blessed Lord the Holy Ghost! cause me to enter into an apprehension of the Person, work, grace, and glory, of Jesus. Sweetly hast thou taught the Church, in this blessed Chapter, that it is through thee, the Church are to wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. Lord! cause my soul daily, hourly, to wait for that everlasting establishment in Christ, which doubts no more. Lord! on this Rock fix my soul! In Christ's Person, may my whole confidence centre. With the Person of Jesus, do thou, O Lord, cause my soul to be so enamored, that I may behold in him a greater, and more

perfect righteousness to make me perfect before God, than all the righteousness of the whole creation of God. Let this view of Jesus, give a firmness to my faith, which nothing can shake. And, while the Lord the Spirit enables me to mortify the flesh with its affections, and lusts; let all the fruits of the Spirit testify, whose I am, and to whom I belong, as sweet testimonies and effects, while Christ alone is the cause, of all my salvation, and all my desire.

CHAPTER 6

CONTENTS

In this Chapter the Apostle concludes his Epistle. He exhorts the Church to Brotherly Affection, and bids them to rest in Hope, assuring, them, that in due Season, they will reap to the Spirit.

GALATIANS 6:1-5

(1)¶ Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. (2) Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. (3) For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. (4) But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. (5) For every man shall bear his own burden.

There is somewhat uncommonly affectionate, and gracious, in this direction of the Apostle. He calls upon the spiritual, that is, the truly regenerate, to manifest the grace of the Spirit, whose influences they profess to live under, in their conduct

towards each other. And as, from the natural weakness, and frailty of their sinful bodies, there will be continual occasion, for the exercise of charity, and forgiveness; *Paul* here intimates, that in proportion to the largeness of the grace some of them professed to that of others, here the Lord afforded opportunity for exercise. Reader! it is among the highest proofs, that the Spirit of Christ dwells in us, when like Christ, we show forth tenderness and compassion, to the infirmities of his mystical body. And, surely, as the Apostle adds, a consciousness of our own liability to error, becomes an unanswerable motive, to be tender to the errors of others.

The burdens *Paul* recommends to assist one another under, can only mean, those spiritual sorrows, which may be soothed by counsel, and by prayer; or those temporal exercises, which a fellow-feeling prompts to, in order to lessen. But Christ is the only Almighty burden-bearer, who hath borne away *sin, by the sacrifice of himself*. And when the Apostle adds, every man, shall bear his own burden, he cannot be supposed to mean, that a child of God will bear his own sins; because Christ *hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God*. And it is one of the most plain, and unalterable truths of the Scripture, that the Lord hath laid on Christ *the iniquity of us all*. Isaiah 53:6. But the Apostle's meaning is, every man hath his own personal exercise, which can only be borne by himself. There is a joy, and there is a sorrow, in which a stranger cannot intermeddle. Proverbs 14:10. Jesus's sweet law of love, is eminently to be attended to, in every instance, where his people can soften each other's sorrows. John 13:34

GALATIANS 6:6-10

(6) Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. (7) Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. (8) For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. (9) And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. (10) As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Within this paragraph, the Apostle hath drawn the outlines of a spiritual man, to distinguish him from one that is wholly carnal. And he makes use of a figure, well known among men, in order to explain. No one that sowed in the earth one kind of grain, ever expected to reap another. And, by a like reasoning, the opposite qualities of flesh and spirit, can never be expected to arise, but as each is sown. The carnal man, in the seed-time of life sowing to the flesh, cannot look forward to the harvest, with an hope to reap spiritually. God is not mocked. Men may deceive themselves, but not the Lord. There will be an exact product, as the man is found carnal or spiritual. Carnal in himself. Spiritual in Christ.

But while these are fixed, and unalterable principles, and are here brought forth by the Apostle as an appeal to the common sense of mankind; it should be rightly considered, that *Paul* is not speaking in relation to the work of God the Spirit on the souls of the regenerate, as though it was their sowing, or hereafter their reaping, will be brought forth from their labors. All is of grace. And, *Paul*, in this very scripture, so explains it. The reaping of the Lord's people in the end, is of the Lord; for he saith, *of the Spirit* (not of his own spirit, but God the Holy Ghost) *he shall reap life everlasting*. Reader! it is very blessed to trace our mercies always to their source. And

the Apostle elsewhere urgeth diligence, from this very principle. *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* Philippians 2:12, 13.

The same train of argument ariseth out of the patience, which the Apostle recommends, in well doing. What well-doing is there of the Child of God, for which he is to expect a reward. Alas! there is nothing, there can be nothing of the creature, for which recompense can be demanded. Sweet are the words of Jesus to this effect, *When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded to you, say, we are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do.* Luke 17:10. Reader! it is good to lay low at the feet of Jesus, under the deep conviction, that all the good that is done upon earth, the Lord doeth it himself. But the Apostle's train of argument is, that the Lord's people should never be weary, nor faint in their minds; at any exercises they meet with, in the present time-state of their existence. Christ is their portion. And in due season, on his account, and for his sake alone, they will reap the blessed fruits of that inheritance, to which, as his people, they are begotten, by his soul-travail, blood-shedding, and righteousness. The expression is not unsimilar to what is said, Hebrews 6:12: *Be ye not slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises.*

GALATIANS 6:11-18

(11) ¶ Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand. (12) As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. (13) For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have

you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. (14) But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. (15) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. (16) And as many as walk according to this rule, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. (17) From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. (18) Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with your spirit. Amen.

It should seem, from the manner of expression which *Paul* here useth, of having written this letter with, his own hand, that it was not the usual method with the Apostle to write his Epistles himself, but by the hand of others. That to the *Romans*, was written by *Tertius*. Romans 16:22. Though from a passage in his second Epistle to the *Thessalonians*, we have authority to conclude, that *Paul* signed every one that bears his name, as a token of his Apostolic commission. 2 Thessalonians 3:17. I do not presume to decide upon this subject, but I venture to suppose, that when at any time *Paul* felt the divine influence of the Holy Ghost upon him, inclining his mind to send an Epistle to the Church, he availed himself of someone near him; that as the Prophet of old dictated while one wrote from his mouth, so the same Lord the Spirit guided *Paul*. Jeremiah 36:1, 2, 17, 18.

The Apostle, in the close of his Epistle, still harps on his favorite subject, the folly, and sin, of observing circumcision. His great design was, to wean from everything, in order to fix their whole soul on Christ. And Reader! I cannot but hope, if under divine teaching, but that from the earnestness with which the Apostle follows up this doctrine in every part of his preachings and writings, you will be led to see the folly, and

sin also, of mingling anything with Christ. If *Paul* totally rejected all carnal ordinances, all self righteousness, both gifts and labors, watchings and prayings, ministrations and services; if all were nothing, yea, worse than nothing in the Apostle's view, for he counted the whole but dung and dross to win Christ and be found in him; what a folly must it be in those who fall so far short of *Paul* in spiritual attainments, to look off Jesus even for a moment, and fancy that there can be anything in the creature to recommend to God?

I pray the Reader to pause a moment, and observe with me, the blessedness of *Paul's* expression, concerning the one, and only one object, of all his glorying and his joy. He speaks with a kind of holy indignation and abhorrence, at the bare idea, of a ransomed soul like his, looking at anything, but his Redeemer. God *forbid* (said he) *that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!* By the cross, he means, the Person of Jesus. For faith hath for its one object, the Person of Christ. And, by the cross, he includes the whole of Christ's offices, and characters, in redeeming his Church, during the present time-state of her continuance on earth, from all iniquity. Here was *Paul's* sole glory. And so is it, and so must it be, in the view of all regenerated souls. Salvation consists not in our attainments. It hath nothing to do with our apprehension of things. It is not what our views are, but what Christ, as the Church's Head, is, in God's view. And this we know, by a voice repeatedly heard from heaven, that God is well pleased in him; that is, in His Person, and His work, as His people's Representative: and therefore, well pleased with Him, and with them in Him. This was *Paul's* glorying. And, as such, he cries out with abhorrence, at whatever else beside,

should be proposed. Reader! what do you say upon the same occasion? Remember, you and I, are as highly concerned as *Paul*, in the same faith. Are we then founded in the same views, and established in the same confidence? How shall we know? The thing is easily known. The Apostle saith, by those views he had of Christ the world was crucified unto him, and he unto the world. By the world, he includes everything of an opposite tendency. Not barely the pleasures of the world, or the persecutions of the world; but what the people of God sometimes find a bitterer cross than either: self, in self-righteousness, and self-corruption. Oh! what a long, painful, lingering death, is the old man of sin, in sinful self, or righteous self, a dying? It is indeed death like that of the cross. And never totally dead, till the body itself is dead. How often may a child of God find himself taking comfort from somewhat in self, and without an immediate eye to Christ. Whereas the fact is, that salvation is wholly in Christ, and totally abstracted from ourselves. Yea, our very faith, considered as the action of our mind upon Christ, and not always remembered, that Christ is, the Author and Giver of faith; hath nothing to do, in the account. It is not our faith, our regeneration, our life in Christ, our experience, our joy in believing, our peace, and the like; these are no *party causes*, but *elects*. Salvation is wholly *out* of ourselves, and wholly *in* Christ. Reader! do attend to this distinction; for it is important. Some men are at a loss for it, and are continually questioning about the application of Christ, and his benefits. But their error lies in this, in not simply attending to what God the Holy Ghost teacheth concerning it. There is no such a thing spoken of in the work of God, as to the application of Christ, and his benefits. It is not scriptural, Christ's words are,

when speaking of God the Holy Ghost making known Christ, to the soul: *He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.* John 16:14. And this the Holy Ghost doth, most sweetly, and completely, and blessedly, when, as in the instance of *Paul*, he so holds forth Christ, in his fullness, suitableness, and all-sufficiency, that we renounce, as *Paul* did, everything beside. All self-attainments, all supposed preparations, every idea of anything to recommend a poor sinner, is lost sight of forever; Christ, and Christ alone, is a portion to live upon, in time, and to all eternity. Reader! can you join the Apostle's triumphant song, and say, from the heart, as he did: *God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*

It were devoutly to be desired, that *Paul's* observation, on the inutility of circumcision, or uncircumcision, was better understood, and more closely attended to. In the Church of Christ, ordinances are so far profitable, or the contrary, as they are under the unction of the Almighty Minister of the Church, the Holy Ghost. Christ's vision is for ever done away. And the new creature by regeneration, is the only infallible mark of belonging to Christ. Ordinances, therefore, to souls that are regenerate, are profitable. But nothing is profitable, where regeneration is not. Baptism of infants, or baptism of riper years, where the baptism of the Holy Ghost accompanieth, are both blessed; for so the Lord Jesus himself hath said: *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.* Believing, and being baptized, Christ joins together. Here it is made a standing ordinance of Christ. *But he that believeth not,* the Lord adds, *shall be damned.* It is the belief which

flows from regeneration, that makes it blessed. The Lord doth not say, he that is baptized not, but he that believeth not, shall be damned. The new creature, is the only infallible mark of grace. Mark 16:16. And the Apostle very, blessedly pronounceth the benediction of grace, on all of this description.

I admire what *Paul* saith, in allusion to his scars and marks, as a faithful soldier of Christ. In taking leave of the Church, he appeals to his exercises, in proof of the truths he had preached to them. And seems to intimate thereby, that if the earnestness of his labors, and his sufferings for Jesus, added to the clear account he had set before them, of justification wholly by Christ, had no effect upon their minds; he requested that he might be troubled no more. And, perhaps, *Paul* might also intimate, that as it would be an heart-breaking business to hear, that after all his labors for them, that they might be established in the faith, they were still in error: let me not know it, saith *Paul*, and let not my soul be further troubled, on the occasion. It is my happiness, and mercy, that I am for ever bearing about in my body, the dying of the Lord Jesus! Reader! it is a sweet relief to a faithful minister's mind, that, be the event what it may, as it relates to the Church, he can, and doth, appeal to the testimonies of the Lord's Spirit, in confirmation of his ministry. If the Reader wishes to see a lovely Portrait of a faithful Pastor, he may find it drawn in vivid colors, 1 Thessalonians 2:3 to the end.

How affectionately *Paul* closeth his Epistle. What could he, what ought he to have said, beyond it? Grace, and the grace of the Lord Jesus, is among the highest of all blessings, in the present time-state of the Church, until grace is swallowed up

in everlasting glory. Reader! what a thought is it to, refresh the Church, that Christ's grace, is suited for all and sufficient for all his people. Jesus hath every grace, and every suited grace, as shall best correspond to their wants, and his glory. May all the brethren know it enjoy it, live upon it, and live up to it, in all their warfare, for the Redeemer's name's sake, and their happiness, in the full assurance of faith, and covenant mercies, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

REFLECTIONS

Everlasting praises to God the Holy Ghost, for his mercy to the Church, in the gift of this sweet and precious Epistle! God be thanked for the ministry of his servant in it! And God be praised for every single instance of mercy vouchsafed the Church, by it.

We here behold, very clearly, the free, and full justification of Christ's Church, in Christ's Person; and by the sole righteousness of Jesus Christ. In Christ may all the Lord's people be found; and never seek salvation by the works of the law, but solely in the Person, and by the righteousness of Christ. And, oh! for a portion of the same Spirit, which actuated *Paul*, when he determined to glory only in the cross of Christ; convinced, that nothing, short of a new creature, can give confidence before God.

After having blessed the Lord the Spirit for this sweet Scripture, we would look with affection to *Paul*, as the highly favored servant of it. Surely, it is profitable to bless God, in, and for, the ministry of his servants; and, therefore, we love the Apostle, for his love to his Master, and zeal in his service.

Farewell for the present, *Paul!* Who but must love thee, and desire to follow thee, as thou hast followed Christ? Shall we not by and by, meet thee before the throne, and bless our Covenant God together? Even so, Amen. Reader! the grace of our Lord Jesus be with the whole Israel of God! Amen.

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

To The

EPHESIANS

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

WE here enter upon a portion of the Inspired Writings, in which God the Holy GHOST, by his penman the Apostle, hath brought the Church into an acquaintance with the deep things of God. Every chapter, more or less, brings with it such sublime discoveries, as none but God the Holy Spirit could have indited, and none but his blessed teaching can give the ability to apprehend. Every child of God, under the LORD's instruction, cannot but be constrained, as he passeth through the several chapters, to remark these things, and to be convinced that the mind of the Apostle must have been carried out in a most eminent manner, in spiritual enjoyment, at the time God the Holy GHOST put the pen into his hand, and such a fullness of grace into his heart, when he caused him to write his Epistle to the church at *Ephesus*.

The Reader for the better apprehension of the distinguishing mercy manifested by the LORD's people among the *Ephesians*, should connect with this Epistle, the history in the formation of the Church at *Ephesus*, as related in the Acts of the Apostles. The establishment of the Gospel, among a people like the *Ephesians*, is

among the world's wonder. Here was erected the magnificent building dedicated to the dunghill idol *Diana*. The city itself, like another *Athens*, appears to have been wholly given to idolatry. It was a place of much pomp, luxury, and pride in human learning, if we may judge by the destruction of the books of curious arts, which were destroyed when some were converted to the faith in Jesus. See Acts 19. throughout. But here also CHRIST had a people. And, hence, according to Covenant Promises, the Holy GHOST gathers out his redeemed, to shew forth JEHOVAH'S praise. JEREMIAH 32:37-38. EZEKIEL 34:12, &c. and 36:24, &c. Hence *Paul* was sent to *Ephesus* to raise a Church. And, hence, for the confirmation of the Church in the faith, he was afterwards directed to send this Epistle.

But we must not stop here. It was not for the Church at *Ephesus* only that this most precious portion of the divine word was sent, but for the church of God in all ages. Thou sands and tens of thousands, who never have seen, or will see *Ephesus*, have found cause to bless God the Holy GHOST for *Paul's* ministry and writings to that people. Yea, ages yet unborn, will find motives of praise for the same!

Concerning the date of this Epistle, writers are divided. Some place it so late as the year 59, corresponding to the 5th year of *Nero*.

I do not think it necessary in this place, to give an account, however briefly, of the great and essential doctrine of which this Epistle treats. These will meet us in their proper place. The chief features of God the Father's eternal love, it the choice of the Church in CHRIST, and to unspotted holiness in him, the full, free, and complete redemption by CHRIST, in the time-state of the Church, and the regenerating grace of God the Holy GHOST, with his several offices and characters; these are opened to us in all their glory, as

we pass through the several chapters, and which supersede the necessity of enlarging upon them here.

It may serve, indeed, a good purpose, under God's grace, to endear this Epistle to us still more, and to induce us to receive it with the greater reverence and godly fear, if it be just remarked, that the Church of *Ephesus* is now no more. The LORD hath fulfilled what he threatened, and long, long since, removed her candlestick out of its place, Revelation 2:5. And it becomes a loud admonition to our British *Ephesus*, in the present awful hour! If God spared not a city so once blessed, take heed lest he spare not thee! The Church of God must stand, and will stand, till time shall be no more. But the Candlestick is a moveable part of the furniture in the house. The LORD may remove this to other nations, as he did by *Ephesus*, while his Church is the same upon earth, till time shall be no more.

Reader! pause at the threshold of this most blessed scripture, and let us both beg the Almighty Giver of it, to unfold to our spiritual apprehension, the gracious contents of it; that CHRIST, who is the great *object* of all contained in it, and the *subject* of all treated of in it, may appear to us in all his, fullness, suitableness, and all-sufficiency; that *in* him, and *of* him, and *through* him, we may find cause continually, through every part of it, to bless JEHOVAH in his threefold character of Person, for all our blessings in Jesus Christ. Amen!

CHAPTER 1

CONTENTS

The Apostle opens the Epistle with his usual Salutation. He then at once enters upon the great Subject he had in View, and traces all

the Mercies of the Church, to God's eternal Purpose in CHRIST, before the Foundation of the World.

EPHESIANS 1:1

(1) ¶ Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

I admire the very opening of this blessed Scripture. *Paul* gives his name and Apostolic authority, by way of confirming its authenticity, and shows at once to whom the Epistle is sent, namely, not to the world at large, *but to the saints at Ephesus*, and to the faithful in CHRIST JESUS. Observe the expression. *Saints* by the original and eternal choice of God in CHRIST, and made so by regenerating grace. But that this most blessed title, might not be supposed as limited to the saints at *Ephesus*, *Paul* adds, and *to the faithful in CHRIST JESUS*, that is, wherever they are found throughout the earth. Reader! do not overlook this. For, hereby, every child of God, when regenerated, finds himself as much interested in this Epistle, as the saints of, that city to whom *Paul* first sent it See 1 Corinthians 1:3. and note.

EPHESIANS 1:2

(2) Grace *be* to you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

I detain the Reader at this verse only to remark, that when the Apostle pronounceth this blessing of grace and peace, it will be proper for us to consider, that the *latter* is the fruit of the *former*. Grace is the source and cause of all our blessings, because this is the free, unpurchased, everlasting love and favor of JEHOVAH, in his threefold character of Persons, towards the Church in CHRIST, and from whence all the effects in pardon, mercy, and peace, result.

And when the Apostle adds; from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy GHOST is included, because neither of, those mercies could be known by us, much less enjoyed by us, but from the manifestation of them by the LORD the Spirit. It is blessed, indeed, to observe, how each glorious Person graciously cooperate in this, and every act, as it concerns the Church's welfare. God the Father manifests grace in the original choice of the Church in CHRIST before all worlds. God the SON manifests grace in the betrothing the Church to himself from everlasting, and in the time-state of the Church, makes her peace in the blood of his cross. And God the Spirit manifests grace in regeneration from the *Adam*-nature of the fall, and revealing all that we are brought into acquaintance with, of the love and favor of each glorious Person, for our joy here, and, our happiness hereafter. Hence, *Paul*, upon another occasion prays, that *the* LORD, (that is, the Holy GHOST,) may *direct the hearts of the redeemed into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for CHRIST*. 2 Thessalonians 3:5.

EPHESIANS 1:3-6

(3) ¶ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: (4) According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Reader pause over those verses. The Apostle proposeth to write an Epistle to the Church, but he hath no sooner opened it with a salutation, than he leaves the consideration of the Church, and breaks out into an holy flame of praises to God. His heart was so full, in the contemplation of the divine love, that, like bottles ready to burst, he could no longer contain. Job 32:19. Oh! how doth this

man's fervor reproach my coldness. LORD! take away this heart of stone of mine, and give me an heart of flesh! Ezekiel 36:26.

But what was it which inflamed the Apostle's mind so highly on this occasion? Perhaps, in part, the recollection that the LORD had blessed his ministry to the *Ephesians*. His farewell discourse, as recorded Acts 20:17, &c. affords a very high proof how dear this Church was to *Paul*. But though this might affect the Apostle, in the pleasing recollection, and for which he found cause to bless God; yet higher views were certainly opened to *Paul's* mind. God the Spirit intended this Epistle for a blessing to the Church in all ages; and whoever reads it, under the influence of the same Al mighty Teacher, must be led to see, that the Apostle was led out beyond himself, when the LORD directed his heart and pen, in this vast train of thought, here brought before the Church. Oh! that the LORD who caused *Paul* to write, may be with me to hear what the Spirit here saith to the Churches.

If the Reader will carefully observe what is contained in the opening of this most blessed Epistle, he will find, that the Apostle is celebrating the praises of the Holy undivided Persons of the Godhead, in their several distinct acts of grace, as manifested to the Church, and in giving to each, and to all, the glory due to the LORD JEHOVAH.

In those verses he begins with ascribing to God the Father, his personal acts of grace and love in *choosing* the Church in CHRIST, *predestinating* the persons of the Church to the adoption of children by CHRIST, and *accepting* the Church in CHRIST to the praise of the glory of his grace. And, as those *three* glorious acts of God the Father, are all said to be the result of *his own good pleasure and will*, so are they declared to be *before the foundation of the world*.

As these sovereign acts of God the Father, though here compressed within a little compass, contain in their bosom immense designs, and are, indeed, the very charter of grace, I beg the Reader to pause over them a few moments, and consider each of them a little more particularly, as calling up the most awakened feelings of the soul, in love and praise.

The first which is spoken of is, that God hath *chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love*. Hence, it must undeniably follow, that when CHRIST, as CHRIST, that is, God and man in one Person, had, at the call of JEHOVAH, come up to the divine view, as the Head and Husband of his Church from everlasting. PSALM 110:4. HEBREWS 5:4-5, PSALM 89:19. this help-meet for him was chosen in him. It was not good in JEHOVAH's sight, that the God-man should be alone. Genesis 2:18. The LORD, therefore, chose the Church as a Bride for him, to be his companion, unto whom he might impart all communicable grace here, in the time-state of her nature, and all communicable glory, in the eternal state hereafter; and all to CHRIST's glory, that He might be *the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all*.

And I beg the Reader to remark with me, the blessedness of what the Apostle saith, concerning this choice that *we should be holy, and without blame before him in love*. This is the first and original view God had of the Church when chosen, holy, and without blame in CHRIST. This is the first and last view God HATH always of the Church in CHRIST. In CHRIST there can be no change. For, though in the after-state which took place at the fall in the *Adam* - transgression, the Church became polluted in herself and her fallen nature; yet, the time-state of sin cannot do away the LORD's purposes of eternity. No sin in *Adam* can destroy the holiness in

CHRIST. It *is in* CHRIST the Church is chosen, and *in him* chosen to be holy, and without blame before God in love. And by the undertaking which CHRIST hath accomplished in himself; and by his one offering of himself, once offered, he hath redeemed, his Church from all iniquity, and perfected for ever them that are sanctified. And, as this was all along among the *first* designs of God, however *last* to be executed; so, the Church, when finally brought home by CHRIST, will still be found in CHRIST, holy and without blame, before God in love; and JESUS will *present her to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but holy, and without blemish.* Ephesians 5:27.

When the Reader hath duly pondered this unspeakable mercy, let him pass on to the *second* manifestation of God the Father's love, which the Apostle HATH recorded in this chapter, when he saith, *having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.* Here is another distinguishing blessing hanging in one rich cluster of God's love, upon the same divine branch. Predestination differs somewhat from choosing, because, while the *former* act of choosing determines the Person, the *latter* of predestinating appoints the means. And the determination here spoken of, to Sonship in CHRIST, makes the means everlastingly certain and sure. For, saith the same Apostle elsewhere, *if children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with CHRIST.* Romans 8:17. The beloved Apostle was so struck with the contemplation of this view, that, unable to contain himself, he cried out, *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!* 1 John 3:1.

And I beg the Reader yet further to observe, that this predestination to the adoption of children by Jesus CHRIST, is blessedly

said to be *to himself*. But who shall explain the full extent of this meaning? To himself! Is it, (I humbly ask the question, but presume not to answer,) is it to JEHOVAH, in his threefold character of Person, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as in reference to each and to all, similar to that mysterious, but soul-comforting truth, where it is said, God was in CHRIST, *reconciling the world to himself!* 2 Corinthians 5:19. Or is it in a personal way, specially spoken, as by the Father? Reader! ponder the weighty words, for they are most blessed. To himself! Not to happiness only, simply in itself. Not to blessing's only in time, or blessings in eternity. Not to all the creation of God, with all that an eternal world can furnish. Not to these, but to God himself. Oh! the wonderful grace contained in the expression: *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of chil dren by Jesus CHRIST unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will!* Sweetly the LORD speaks on this ground in several Scrip tures: *This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.* Isaiah 43:21. So again: *Know that JEHOVAH hath set apart him that is godly for himself;* PSALM 4:3. So once more: *For JEHOVAH hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar pleasure.* Psalm 135:4. Reader! I do but glance at those rich things. To unfold them to the full is impossible!

The *third* gracious act of God the Father's love to the Church, which the Apostle hath noticed in this blessed Scripture, is, the acceptance of the Church in CHRIST, *to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.* Here again, who shall unfold all the vast things contained in the bosom of this wonderful verse? And when considered as the close of the former, what a climax the whole riseth up into, of unspeakable blessings, *First, chosen in CHRIST. Secondly, predestinated to glory*

in CHRIST. And, *thirdly*, accepted in CHRIST, as everlastingly united to him, and considered one with him for ever!

And what endears this still more, and which I pray the Reader never to forget, of this acceptation of the persons of God's children in CHRIST is, that it is from everlasting, as well as the act of choosing and predestinating. The Apostle hath not yet in this chapter noticed any act of God the Son, or God the Holy Ghost, in their personal office character. Redemption by CHRIST, which is next to be spoken of, is not as yet brought forward. The accepting in the Beloved, is spoken of as a thing done before redemption became necessary. Indeed, what is said of *choosing*, and *predestinating*, and *accepting*, is said to be before the foundation of the world, and, consequently, before sin was known upon earth, or redemption from sin needful. The expression is strong, he *hath* made us accepted in the Beloved. The Apostle speaks of it as of a *thing past*; Whereas, in the following verse, when he comes to speak of redemption, he speaks of it as of a *thing now*, we *have* redemption in his blood. I beg the Reader not to overlook these things. In the vast subject we are now upon, every minute point is full of importance.

Here then let the Reader for the moment pause. Let him contemplate those *three* immense blessings, as the special personal acts and gifts of God the Father, and resulting from his fatherly love to CHRIST, as the Head of the Church, and to the Church, as in Him. First, the *choice*. Let the Reader observe, moreover, that this original and eternal choice of the persons of the Church, in all the individuals of the whole body, is said to be solely from himself, and according to the good pleasure of his will. No one cause, but from himself to himself, producing such gracious effects. Let the Reader duly ponder this. Then let him proceed to the further

consideration, that this choice in God the Father was, that the Church should be holy, and without blame before him in love, most plainly showing, that as the Church is chosen in CHRIST, and CHRIST is the Holy ONE; the Church is holy in his holiness, and everlastingly considered in him, without blame before God in love. All the after circumstances of the fall, in the present time-state of the Church, (and for which, as we shall shortly see, all provision was made,) cannot do away, neither counteract, those eternal purposes of GOD, which he purposed in himself. The Church was chosen to holiness in CHRIST, and in his holiness is beheld. *Secondly*, as chosen in CHRIST, and to holiness in CHRIST, so *predestinated* to sonship in CHRIST. And, *thirdly*, the full acceptance of our persons in CHRIST, is to the praise of the glory of his grace. Not only to the praise of his grace, but to the glory of his grace. As if God's glory was made more glorious its the manifestation of such riches of his grace. And to crown the whole, all these unspeakable gifts of God the Father are the result of his own free and sovereign grace; before the foundation of the World; and, consequently, before the Church had being, and sin in Adam, to make the redemption by Christ necessary.

EPHESIANS 1:7

(7) In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

In this verse we now come to the subject of redemption. Redemption! A word, taken in all its vast dimensions, bigger than a thousand such worlds as ours. Let us, however, proceed regularly into this mysterious subject. We have noticed, (though briefly,) in the former verses, the gracious personal acts of God the Father, in re

lation to the Church. Here we enter upon the gracious personal acts of God the Son, resulting, as this verse expresseth it, and as the former had done, *from the riches of his grace*. This is a precious point always to be kept in view. For, as it was said of the Father, his sovereign acts of grace flowed from *the good pleasure, of his will*; so the Son's *from the riches of his grace*; and so the Holy Ghost's, as we shall hereafter (when we come to that part of the subject) discover, *from his good pleasure, which he purposed in him self*, verse 9.

I begin the subject contained in this verse, with observing, that when the Apostle, in reference to CHRIST, saith, that *we have redemption in his blood*, there is included in it the cause of this redemption, in the Church's union with her LORD, as her Head and Husband. This is of course implied. CHRIST'S redemption of his Church presupposes his interest in his Church, and, of consequence, in all that belongs to her. It is a comprehensive way of speaking. Redemption includes everything, in relation to the Person, work, offices, and characters, in which the Son of God engaged, when assenting our nature, and when he came into this our world, in this time-state of the Church, and accomplished redemption by his blood and righteousness.

But though the vast subject of redemption compriseth every thing that is blessed for the Church to meditate upon, night and day, during the whole of her present time-state upon earth, as it will call up her intellectual faculties, when full ripened hereafter in heaven, to dwell upon for ever; yet, I must not in this place enter at large upon it. In several parts of this *Poor Man's Commentary*, as the scriptures led to it, I have glanced at it, and, therefore, would there refer the Reader. See all the Gospels upon it. See also Romans

3:25. Galatians 3:13. and Commentary on both. A few of the outlines only can I here detain the Reader with.

And *first*. The Apostle speaks of this vast work of redemption, as a thing possessed. *We have redemption*. Yes! CHRIST on the cross declared it *to be finished*. John 19:30. But for the matter itself, who shall speak its value? Its dimensions are infinite, for it reacheth through all time, and through all eternity. And the nature of it, as well as its duration and extension, is attended with such difficulty to explain, that unless we could determine the nature of sin, we can never determine the vastness of redemption. But, so infinitely important is it in itself, that without an interest in it, notwithstanding the Church being *chosen* in CHRIST, *predestinated* to the adoption of children in CHRIST, and *accepted* in CHRIST; yet, having forfeited all right to these blessings by the *Adam-fall*, and our whole nature, being thereby degraded and sunk, but for redemption we must have remained in the captivity of sin, and under the heavy penalty to the breaches of it, as well as also been totally unqualified to enjoy the privilege of children to all eternity. Oh! the unspeakable blessings included in redemption!

Secondly. The greatness of redemption is enhanced by the greatness of the Redeemer. We may in some measure form an idea, however imperfectly to what it really is, of the immensity of the blessings, by the immensity of his nature, who alone could accomplish it. God and man in one Person. *In whom*, (saith the Apostle,) *we have redemption*. How blessedly Scripture speaks of CHRIST in numberless places. *For thy Maker is Mine Husband; the LORD of Hosts is his Name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy ONE of Israel, The God of the whole earth shall he be called!* Isaiah 54:5. See also Isaiah 43:1-7.

Thirdly. How redemption hath been wrought. *Through his blood.* Here again, all created wisdom is incompetent to enter into any adequate apprehension of the mysterious work. The Scriptures declare the fact itself. But no created powers, either angels or men; are able to conceive of it, with any clearness of knowledge. We are told, indeed, that the angels do not understand, *but desire to look into.* 1 Peter 1:12.

Fourthly. As the Person who alone could bring salvation, and the work he wrought in the accomplishment, exceed our utmost faculties to describe; so the *effect* baffles all conception also, to form equal ideas. We are told, that we have by it *the forgiveness of all our sins*; yea, in Him himself we have this vast mercy. But who shall calculate the greatness, or the number; the nature, or the quality of sins. It takes in, and includes our whole lives, past, present, and future. And, therefore, so infinitely extensive in its efficacy is redemption, from sin in all its consequences, that it reacheth through all time, and through all eternity. And so infinitely great in its power, that *it cleanseth from all sin.* 1 John 1:7.

And, *fifthly*, to sum up all, as if to silence for ever all the pretensions of the proud, and all the fears of the humble, the whole is said to be the sole result *of the riches of his grace.* So that grace, and the riches of that grace, provides the remedy, and grace accepts its own providing. And all, from beginning to end, is the sole effect of grace.

Some have stumbled at this account of the Holy Ghost, and in the pride of their unhumiliated heart, have boldly questioned, how free grace can be, said to do all and yet CHRIST hath purchased this redemption of his people by his blood? But such men have not been taught of GOD, *and, therefore, err, because they know not the*

Scriptures, nor the power of God. Matthew 22:29. It was free grace to admit a Surety for the Church, when in the *Adam*-nature she had sinned, and come short of the glory of God. And it was not only free grace, but the riches of that grace, not only to admit a Surety, but to provide One and this God the Father did, when he gave his dear Son as the Head, Husband, and Surety of his Church. For Jesus was *made* a Surety. Hebrews 7:22. Now the LORD JEHOVAH magnified the riches of his grace, in this very way and manner. He had *chosen* the Church in CHRIST, to be *holy* in CHRIST, to a *sonship* in CHRIST, and to an *acceptation* in CHRIST, and that from all eternity. But to magnify the riches of this grace the Church, during the time-state of her being, falls into sin, and forgets her adoption-character, and comes under the curse of a broken law. Here then opens a way for the fullest display of grace, in causing her recovery, and by such a plan of wisdom, love, and power, as enhanceth every blessing tenfold. Jesus shall redeem her by his blood. So that redemption is the effect of the original grace. And so far is it from militating against the freedom of that grace, that it, is in fact, one of the highest fruits of it. God's children in CHRIST, when fallen in sin, shall be redeemed by CHRIST, and redemption, which is the biggest of all blessings, in the time-state of the Church, shall he found to be the result of the first, original, and eternal design of God, in his purposes towards the Church, from all eternity. And God the Holy Ghost elsewhere beautifully expresseth the precious truth, when he saith, *we are justified freely by his grace*; but he adds, it is *through the redemption that is in CHRIST JESUS*. Romans 3:24. Redemption purchaseth not our sonship, for that was from all eternity. But redemption purchaseth our pardon, when as children we had sinned, and come short of God's glory. Hence this, blessed Scripture declares the soul refreshing truth; *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to*

the riches of his grace. Hence, also, the song of heaven. Revelation 5:9.

EPHESIANS 1:8-9

(8) Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; (9) Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

In those verses, the Church is brought into the view of the *third* great branch, of this vast subject, namely, the grace of God the Holy Ghost. The Apostle having gone over the several heads, of God the Father's love to the Church, in *choosing, adopting, and accepting* the Church in CHRIST; and God the Son's love to the Church, in *redeeming* the Church from her fallen state of sin, by his blood; now brings forward the love of God the Holy Ghost to the Church, in his great office-work, in the vast concern, in those parts of character, which are peculiarly his to accomplish. The words ample use of to express the divine agency of the Holy Ghost, are comprehensive of the whole grace of the Spirit, which he manifesteth towards the Church, from his first Almighty act of *grace in* regeneration, until grace is finished in glory. *He hath aboundeth towards us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself*

The first point I beg the Reader to remark with me is, that the same act of free grace and love is here ascribed to God the Holy Ghost, as was ascribed before, both to the Person of the Father, and to the Person of the Son. This is a grand point to observe, For it proves both the Person of God the Holy Ghost, by such an act of a personal nature. It proves also his eternal power and Godhead, in common with the Father and the Son. And it proves no less, the equal at of grace towards the Church, in each of the Per sons of the

Godhead, when we are here taught that GOD the Father's *choosing, adopting, and accepting, was according to the good pleasure of his will*, verse 5. that God the Son's *redemption* of the Church, was, *according to the riches of his grace*, verse 7. and God the Holy Ghost's *abounding toward us in all wisdom and prudence*, having made known unto us *the mystery of his will*, was also *according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself*. Reader! pause, I pray you, and admire the beautiful order, as well as the wonderful grace, in this manifestation, of the Personalities of the Godhead towards the Church. Behold! here the love of each Person, brought forward in distinct and special acts of favor to the Church. God the Father choosing and appointing, God the Son accomplishing, and God the Holy Ghost making known, and rendering effectual, the blissful mercies! Oh! how are we taught to look up with equal love, and reverence, and praise, to the joint cause of all our blessings, in time, and to all eternity, and with all the heavenly host, sing the song recorded, *of blessing, and honor, and glory; and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and unto the LAMB for ever and ever*. Revelation 5:13.

I must not enter into an extensive view of what may be supposed implied in those *aboundings* of the Holy Ghost. This *Poor Man's Commentary*, will not admit it. But we may fairly suppose, that by the expressions of *wisdom and prudence*, are intended, the whole of God the Spirit's work, in the Covenant of Grace. His is the office to reveal, and, as it is here expressed, *to make known the mystery of his will*. He is the Almighty *Zaph-nath-paaneah*; the *Revealer of hidden things*. Genesis 41:45. And so essential is the work of God, the Spirit, that to him is reserved, the whole efficient ministry, as it relates to the personal enjoyment, of each, and every individual

member of CHRIST's mystical body. His is, *to take of the things of CHRIST, and reveal to the soul. His is, to convince of sin, of righteousness, and judgment.* John 16:8. And, all that acquaintance we have, with the Person of CHRIST, the work of CHRIST, the glory of CHRIST, are his special work. Until the LORD the Spirit hath quickened, and regenerated our fallen nature, every child of God is *dead in trespasses and sins.* See Ephesians 2:1. and Commentary. So that all the actions of the new-born child of God, leadings to the throne, access to the throne, and acceptance at the throne in CHRIST, are the immediate work of God the Holy Ghost. Hence *Paul* prays for the Church, that the LORD, (that is, the Spirit,) might *lead their hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for CHRIST.* 2 Thessalonians 5.

I will only detain the Reader with a short observation, on the work of God the Holy Ghost, in this blessed office, of his when abound ing toward us in all wisdom and prudence, and making known to us the Mystery of his will; and will then pass on to the next verse: namely, how blessedly the LORD accomplisheth those gracious purposes; when he makes known to a child of God, the plague and burden of sin, and causeth him to feel it also; and then opens to his view the aboundings of grace, and causeth him to believe the record, that God hath done away the whole of sin, in the blood of CHRIST; yea, to feel his personal interest in it also. Reader! Is not this , making known to us the mystery of his will? When we behold the vast pile of sin, reaching up, as *Ezra* saith, to heaven; *Ezra* 9:6. and the blood of CHRIST, washing all away: so that, *when the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.* JEREMIAH 1:20. This is grace indeed, and the aboundings of grace, which, like the ocean, buries in its bosom the loftiest mountains, if cast into it, and covers them

over. This sea of mercy, in CHRIST's blood, riseth above all the highest water-mark of sin, and the aboundings of sin. And is, as the Prophet beautifully expresseth it, *casting all our sins into the depths of the sea*. Micah 7:18, 19. Romans 5:20, 21.

EPHESIANS 1:10

(10) That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him:

I beg to consider this verse alone. There is not perhaps the fellow to it, in relation to the vast subject it treats of in all the Bible. It opens to us the very heart of God, as it respects his whole designs of grace, toward the Church. It shows us, how, from all eternity, the mind of JEHOVAH hath been occupied on this grand concern. And, what I beg yet more particularly for the Reader to remark with me upon the occasion, is, that it most plainly, and decidedly shows, that the whole designs of JEHOVAH, are to glorify the LORD JESUS. All is said to be decreed *for* him. All things are to centre *in* him. The dispensation of events, and the fullness of times, are all directing their several pursuits to this one termination; and, like the numberless rays of light, converging to one centre, all are to meet *in him*. I admire the repetition, *even in him*. There is a blessed emphasis in it, and so designed to be, in order to intimate the importance of the thing: *even in him*, We have another beautiful example of the same kind, Colossians 1:20. *By him I say*, saith Paul. As if (and which is in reality the case,) the glory of CHRIST, (which is the only visible manifestation of JEHOVAH,) became the one, and only object, for which the LORD went forth in acts of creation. 2 Corinthians 4:6. John 1:18.

I cannot attempt to enter into the vast subject of this one verse. I would ponder over it with the most profound reverence, and

attention. And, I would pray the Reader, to do the same. But it, must be God the Spirit's province, to unfold, and explain. The very out lines of it are volumes.

First. What a view is here given, of the original, and ultimate design of JEHOVAH, in all his dispensations; namely, *to gather all things in CHRIST.* Think, Reader! What a wonderful Person must this God-man be in himself, independent of every other consideration, in whom all things are finally to be gathered?

Secondly. What a new, and living way, is here opened to our contemplation, for communion, and happiness, with JEHOVAH, in his threefold Personalities, in, and through, this wonderful Person; to whom all things are to be gathered, and in whom, and by whom alone, all access, entrance, and acceptation, can be found?

Thirdly. What grace, and love, and affection, doth the very plan of JEHOVAH'S wisdom by this way manifest, towards the Church; since, without this bond of fusion, formed by that portion of human nature taken into the Godhead by CHRIST, there could have been no gathering *to* God, neither communion *with* God. For so infinite is the distance, between what is created, and the Creator; between what is visible, and invisible; finite, and infinite; comprehensible, and incomprehensible; that, but for the Son of God assuming union with our nature, to act as a medium, and bond of union; there could have been no meeting-place between God and his creatures, neither open revelation to all eternity. The Apostle, therefore, appears to have been so sensible of this, that, when speaking of this gathering of all things to CHRIST, he lays the whole emphasis on Him, to whom the gathering is to be. CHRIST is the *great Him:* the only *Him,* by whom, and in whom, it can be accomplished. By virtue of his being the Head of his body the Church, he becomes both the

centre of union, and of communication; and is *the fullness of him that filleth all in all*.

Reader! pause over the vast subject! Think of CHRIST's Person! How dear to God! How dear ought He to be to us! What an awful state must they be in, who deny his Godhead? Oh! the folly, the vast folly, of such unbelief! How can He be less than God, unto whom all things are to be finally gathered? Think, what an awful gathering that will be, of the infidel, who, when the LORD shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, will appoint him, his portion with the unbelievers. Luke 12:46. And think, what a glorious gathering of his redeemed, when he shall *come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all that believe*. 2 Thessalonians 1:10.

Ephesians 1:11-14

(11) In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: (12) That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. (13) In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, (14) Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

I will only detain the Reader with short observations, on what remains to be considered in this Chapter, though full of the most important points, because I have already far exceeded my limits. In those verses, amidst many other blessed things, we have *two* great subjects of doctrine spoken of: the first is, that the Church is predestinated to the LORD'S glory, by trusting, in CHRIST. And the other is, that after this predestinating act of JEHOVAH, to the belief in CHRIST, the Holy Ghost is said to seal the persons of believers, as that Holy Spirit of promise. Reader! do behold the safety, and

blessedness of the Church, under those two immense points of security!

In relation to our trust and belief, it should be always carefully remembered, that these acts of ours, are not the *cause* of our safety and blessedness, but the *effect*. CHRIST is the great object of trust and belief. And wherefore? Because, what CHRIST wrought, and accomplished, was the result of God's everlasting love, in CHRIST; Hence, CHRIST is said, *by himself* to have purged our sins. Hebrews 1:3. This, then, is the *cause*. Our dependence upon him, and what he hath done, is the *effect*. It is, indeed, always blessed, to live in the comfortable enjoyment of these things by faith. For the promise, in the charter of grace, runs in these words: *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee*. Isaiah 26:3. But then, our faith is not the cause of safety, but the fruit. CHRIST *is all, and in all*.

We rise higher, however, in the *second* great point of doctrine, in relation to the Spirit's sealing: for this is not a mere *effect*, but a *cause*. It is true indeed, in one sense, both CHRIST's *redemption*, and the Spirit's sealing, may be called, the *fruits*, and *effects*, of the original, and eternal purpose of JEHOVAH, in his threefold character of Persons, towards the Church; because, none are redeemed, or sealed, but what are in the everlasting *choice* of God, the *sonship* in CHRIST, and *acceptation* in the Beloved, and this before the foundation of the world. Nevertheless, our trusting in CHRIST, and our being sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, differ as much as effects from causes. Reader! pause to admire, what a sweet testimony it is, to the souls of the LORD'S people, when they have received the earnest of the Spirit? A work, in which they are altogether passive. And, how plainly do they prove, the certainty of their being sealed, when, from the same Almighty Power, they are

enabled to trust in CHRIST, for the salvation of their souls? Here they find, what is called in scripture, *a good hope through grace*: And, hence they learn to trace their mercies to the fountain-head of mercy, in discovering the whole to flow from the everlasting purposes of God in CHRIST. *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. 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 8:29, 30.

Ephesians 1:15-23

(15) ¶ Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, (16) Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; (17) That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: (18) The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, (19) And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, (20) Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, (21) Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: (22) And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, (23) Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

The Apostle, having in the former part of this most blessed Chapter, brought forward some of the immense mercies, resulting from JEHOVAH'S love in his Personal manifestations to the Church; now follows the whole with prayer, that the Church might be favored with such apprehensions of the same, as centered in CHRIST; and such as might safely carry her through all her time-state upon earth, until brought home to everlasting glory in heaven. There is somewhat truly blessed, and sublime, in this prayer of the Apostle. It carries

with it indeed, the most decided proofs, of the Apostle's having been taught it, by the Holy Ghost. Neither can the imagination conceive, anything more highly important, for the LORD'S redeemed ones to have a full apprehension concerning, than what *Paul* prays for. How truly blessed, to have the eyes spiritually enlightened, to the consciousness of being redeemed from all the dreadful consequences of the *Adam*-fall transgression; forgiven all sins, and sealed to everlasting safety and happiness in CHRIST, with that Holy Spirit of promise? And when these mercies are so incorporated in the mind, in *the knowledge of the hope of CHRIST'S calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints*; what additional sweetness, in point of testimony, the whole proves, in running up the contemplation to the source of all, in God's everlasting love? We then see, both God's choice, and our adoption-character secured, beyond the possibility of doubt, and all centered in CHRIST for his Church, which is his body, *the fullness of him that filleth all in all*. The LORD, who gave *Paul* the spirit of prayer for the Church, graciously answers it in mercy; and all blessings must follow, to the LORD'S glory, and the Church's happiness in CHRIST!

REFLECTIONS

My soul! look up for grace, as *Paul* did, to bless God, even the Father of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, for the wonders of divine love, as set forth in this precious Chapter from whence flow all the mercies to the Church, in time; and to all eternity. Behold! my soul, what method the LORD was pleased to make use of, among all the stores of his Omnipotency, to make known his love to the Church! In the Person of his clear Son, he caused the whole to center. And the LORD was pleased, to render the whole ten thousand times more blessed, in making all to flow in, and from, and through, a nature

like our own, in the Person of the God-Man CHRIST JESUS. Pause, my soul! admire, and adore each glorious Person, in their Office-character, *in* this vast concern. Bless God the Father, for his love, *in choosing, predestinating, adopting, and accepting*, the whole body the Church, in CHRIST, before the foundation of the world! Bless God the Son, for that love of his, *in marrying* the Church from everlasting; and for *redeeming* her from the ruins of the fall, during her time-state upon earth. And bless God the Holy Ghost, for having *abounded toward the Church in all wisdom and prudence, in making known the mystery of his will*, and in all his *regenerating* grace and mercy. Yea, blessed for ever be JEHOVAH, in his threefold character of Person, for CHRIST, and all blessings in CHRIST, temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings, for ever!

LORD! enable thy Church, to be looking forward to that glorious day of God, when the fullness of times being come, all things shall be gathered in CHRIST. What a gathering of thy people will this be, in glories unspeakable? What a dispensation of terror to thy foes? Precious, precious JESUS! how sweet is it to my soul, the assurance, of being now gathered unto thee in grace, as the earnest, and pledge of being then gathered unto thee in glory. LORD! fill my poor soul with thy fullness; and manifest daily to my joy, and thy praise, that thou art indeed my Head, and *the fullness, which filleth all in all!*

CHAPTER 2

CONTENTS

The Church is reminded of her original State of Nature, in being quickened in CHRIST. The Apostle extols the Triumphs of Grace.

The Chapter closeth, with showing CHRIST to be the Foundation of his Church.

EPHESIANS 2:1-6

(1) ¶ And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; (2) Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: (3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (4) ¶ But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, (5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) (6) And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:

However humbling, the subject is most blessed, with which the Apostle opens this Chapter, in reminding the Church, of her being quickened, *when dead in trespasses and sins*. There is nothing more profitable, than for a child of God, to have always in remembrance, the *Adam*-state of a fallen nature, in which we were all born. In Heaven itself, it must tend to heighten all the felicities of the place. And, sure I am, that to the last moment of life, when going to the throne, it will endear God the Father's love, and make precious the Person of JESUS, and his blood, while we keep in remembrance, *the rock whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence we were digged*. Isaiah 51:1.

It will serve perhaps, under God the Spirit's teaching, to give the Reader a more quick apprehension, of the importance of the thing itself, in the recovery of our fallen nature by grace, if we take a short view of the awful state, to which the Church of God, as well as the whole nature of man, was reduced, by the fall; in order to behold the greatness of divine love, in the redemption by CHRIST.

The LORD the Spirit bless the review of both, to his glory, and to our happiness.

And *first*. The lost estate of man, and the whole Church of God, in that lost estate, by reason of the original sin of *Adam*. It is a blessed thought, that the Church of God, as chosen in the eternal act, and will, and pleasure, of God; was chosen, and created pure, and holy, in *Adam*, the head, and parent of all mankind in nature. But, it is as sure a truth, that all fell in him, the Church as well as the world, and became sinful before God. It pleased God, as if to marr the pride of nature, and the higher to extol free sovereign grace in CHRIST, to appoint things so to be. So that, when *Adam* fell, in that fall he spiritually died. And this was the death, the LORD threatened, and fulfilled, in his own Person and all his seed. He did not die in body: For he lived many years after, and had children. But he died in spirit. He lost all spiritual apprehension of divine things. And all his posterity, are literally born the same. Generation from father to son, is only in nature: and *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*. 1 Corinthians 2:14.

Secondly. I beg the Reader to attend to this Scriptural statement, of this death in spirit. There is a death of the *body*, to which by sin, the whole race of man is subject, and which all fall under. But this is not the spiritual death, from which *Paul* tells the *Ephesians* they by grace were quickened. And, there is an *eternal* death, to which every unregenerated sinner is exposed. But neither is, this the death *Paul* had in contemplation. For, as the former consists in the separation of soul and body, *for the body without the spirit is dead*, James 2:26: so the *latter*, consists in an everlasting separation of soul and body from God in CHRIST to all eternity. And this is the awful death of all Christless souls. For what the soul of a man is to the body, to give life to it; such is CHRIST to the soul. But the

spiritual death which *Paul* had in view, and from whence he tells the *Ephesians* they were quickened; is a *death in trespasses and sins*. And, it was this which our first parents experienced, and in which their whole posterity are born a life of enmity and alienation to God. And from which none less than God the Holy Ghost, can quicken. John 1:13.

Thirdly. From what has been said, it will be in some measure easy to infer, the vast work of regeneration; and what high views the Apostle had, of this act of grace in God the Spirit, when he said to the Church: *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins*. I stay not in this place, to enter into the particulars of this gracious act of God. This would lead too far. And, indeed, I have already in this work, somewhat largely considered the subject, to which I refer. See John 3:8. and Commentary.

I beg, however, to detain the Reader one moment longer, just to call his attention to the expression of the Apostle, when speaking of the former state of the Church, before being quickened by the Spirit; he saith, that *they were by nature children of wrath even as others*. By which we may suppose, he could not possibly mean, that they were children of God's wrath, when he had before, in the preceding Chapter, said so many blessed things, of their being *chosen of God, to be holy, and without blame before him in love; being, predestinated to the adoption of children, by JESUS CHRIST to himself, and accepted in the Beloved*. See Chap. 1:4-6. It is impossible that such could have ever been the children of God's wrath; though when born in the *Adam*-nature of a fallen state, were justly exposed, to God's wrath, and but for their sonship in *CHRIST*, and acceptation in him, must have suffered the punishment due to sin, But it should seem, that the Apostle's meaning is, they were by nature, children *deserving wrath*, even as others. And, moreover,

by the fall, were also of *wrathful, tempers, and dispositions*; and, as *Paul* elsewhere said of himself, and all others like himself, while in a state of unregeneracy, were *living in malice and envy; hateful, and hating one another*. Titus 3:3. I thought it proper to state this to the Reader, for some, for want of attention to this grand feature of our holy faith, in our grace-union with CHRIST, by GOD's choice from all eternity; have been led away with the too common phrase of calling God's children as if once heirs of hell, and children of the devil. Blessed, be God! they never were so, though children *deserving* wrath; yet in CHRIST, saved with an everlasting salvation. And the gift of the Spirit is, because *they are sons*, and not to make them so. See Galatians 4:6. and Commentary.

It will not be necessary, for me to dwell, particularly, on what the Apostle saith in those verses, concerning *Satan*, whom he calleth, *the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh, in the children of disobedience*. I have at some length, made remarks on his delusions, in the hearts of men: Luke 22:46. and Matthew 12:30. I refer therefore the Reader to those Scriptures. And, in addition to what is there said, concerning the empire of *Satan*, it will only be necessary yet further to observe in this place, that when the Apostle calls him *the prince of the power of the air*, he doth not mean, that *Satan* directs the winds or storms, or hath the least influence over the *natural* air which men breathe. For this would be, to ascribe to him, acts of creation. The sense is, that his principality is over the malignant spirits of the air, devils like himself, for we are told of a legion. Mark 5:9. Those being airy spirits, live in the air: and over these, *Satan* reigns, as he doth in the children of disobedience, whose hearts he calleth *his house*, Luke 11:24. It is in this sense, I apprehend, *Paul* calls him *the prince of the power of the air*.

Having said thus much by way of preface, and for the better apprehension of the weighty subject the Apostle had in view, when he expressed himself in the opening of this Chapter, on quickening *the dead in trespasses and sins*; I now beg the Reader's attention, to this interesting point, of our most holy Faith.

And *first*. When *Paul* tells the *Ephesian* Church, that the LORD had quickened them, who were, by nature, *dead in trespasses and sins*; it is evident, that he ascribed the Almighty agency to God the Holy Ghost. It is, indeed, his special, and personal office, in the Covenant of Grace. And before we go further, I beg the Reader to pause, and consider with me, the beautiful order, and harmony, in the gracious acts of love, manifested in the Persons of the GodHEAD, towards the Church. To God the Father, peculiarly belongs, the sovereign act, of *choosing* the Church, *predestinating* the several per sons of the Church, into the *adoption* of children, by JESUS CHRIST, *and accepting* them, in the beloved. To God the Son, his province of love, and favor, manifested to the Church, is ascribed, in *marrying* to himself the Church before all worlds; and *redeeming* the Church, in the time-state of her being, from the ruin into which she had fallen, in the *Adam*-nature of sin and corruption. To God the Holy Ghost, in an especial manner, from his office engagements in the Covenant of grace, belongs the glorious act of *regeneration*: or, as *Paul* here expresseth it, quickening the dead of CHRIST'S people, which by nature, are *dead in trespasses and sins*. Think, Reader! what a beautiful order, and harmony, is here shown, in those equal acts of grace, by the several Persons of the Godhead, as they relate to the Church of CHRIST!

When the Reader hath duly pondered the blessed subject, in this point of view, I would desire to call his attention to another; namely, that those acts of each Person of the Godhead, are once done, and

done for ever. When God chose the persons of, the Church, to make up the whole body of CHRIST, the act, and the will, were instantly together. No alteration could evermore take place, in this purpose, and decree, of an unchangeable God! Hence JESUS, in the days of his flesh, called off his disciples' minds, from being elated with their momentary triumphs over devils, to rejoice at what could never alter, but last for ever. *Rejoice, said JESUS, that your names are written, in heaven!* Luke 10:20. What a precious consideration is this, to a child of God.

In like manner, when JESUS married his Church, before all time; the deed once done, neither death, nor hell, could after disannul. See Hosea 2:19, 20. Isaiah 28:15-19. And when, during the time-state of the Church, JESUS redeemed his Church; by that *one offering of himself once offered, he perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* HEBREWS 10:14, There are a multitude of scriptures to the same amount, which I must not stay to write down at large; but the Reader may refer to. Romans 6:9, 10, 11. HEBREWS. 9:25, 26. And, it is in this sense, that sweet Scripture is to be read 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15, 16.

Now let the Reader behold, the sweet and blessed office-work of God the Spirit, in regeneration; which like those of the Father and the Son, when once done, is done for ever. *You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* And, being quickened, the spirit can die no more. For it is *made a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.* 2 Peter 1:4. It is *born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.* 1 Peter 1:23. Behold; Reader! what a beautiful order, and correspondence, there is here again also, in relation to those gracious acts of the divine Persons; and the everlasting nature of

them. As the Father's choice, once done, can never be lost; so the Son's marriage, and redemption, is but once done, and is for ever; and the regeneration of the spirit by the Holy Ghost, is but one act, and which can never be liable to any possibility of dying, or death, for ever. So precious, so very precious, are those great truths of God!

One word more. This quickening of the child of God, who by nature in the *Adam-fall*, was before *dead in trespasses and sins*, though the *last* in point of order, from the gracious acts of the Godhead; (the being chosen *in CHRIST*, and redeemed *by CHRIST* having before taken place,) is nevertheless, the *first* in point of discovery, of our high privileges, either of the Father's love, or the Son's grace, towards his Church, and people. Until my soul by regeneration was quickened, into this new, and spiritual life; I had no consciousness of my high birth-right, leading to my high calling, in *CHRIST JESUS*. But no sooner did the *LORD* the Holy Ghost call me out of nature's darkness, and the shadow of death, by breaking my bands asunder; than I discovered, whose I was, and to whom I belonged, in *CHRIST JESUS*. Reader! think of those mercies; and may both you and I have grace, rightly to value them. If, as an Apostle saith, *he that converts a sinner, from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death*; though in all this, he can only act as an instrument, and not the principal, to do this: what multitudes of souls doth God the Spirit save from everlasting death, who is both the principal, and cause, in every instance, where this mercy is wrought, and the great source of spiritual life to every sinner that He quickened? James 5:20. *Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!*

Reader! let me only and from the whole, how blessed it is, when God's children prove their being chosen by God the Father in

CHRIST; and their being both married to CHRIST, and redeemed by CHRIST; when God the Spirit hath quickened them, to this new and spiritual life, who were *before dead in trespasses and sins!* Peter the Apostle, in allusion to this change, (and a wonderful change it is, the greatest ever made, in time, or in eternity;) saith, that ye *should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.* And what can be more suited to a truly regenerated soul? *In time past, (saith the Apostle,) ye were not people; but are now the people of God. Which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.* 1 Peter 2:9, 10. Not that the Apostle means, that before regeneration, they were not a people in CHRIST. For they were always his people: *God from the beginning having chosen them to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit.* 2 Thessalonians 2:13. But the sense is, that before they were regenerated, they knew it not. So, in like manner, they had always mercy, but had no consciousness of that mercy; nor a consciousness of the want of that mercy, while they remained *dead in trespasses and sins.* But, all these blessings were discovered, and enjoyed by them, after *the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared: not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.* Titus 3:4, 5. So that, this saving act of God the Holy Ghost, brings the child of God into life, and the enjoyment of those vast privileges, which God the Father appointed, in choosing him, and adopting him in CHRIST; and God the Son be stowed upon him, in uniting him to himself, and redeeming him from the ruin of the present time-state of his Church. Of such unspeakable moment it is, in the life of every child of God, to be quick ened, from the death of sin in *Adam*, to the life of righteousness in CHRIST. Well may we again exclaim, with the Apostle: *Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!*

EPHESIANS 2:7-10

(7) That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. (8) For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: (9) Not of works, lest any man should boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

I admire what the Apostle saith, in the first of these verses, of God's design, in the display of his grace, by the permission of evil. Let men soften the subject as they please; but certainly, the introduction of evil into the creation of God, though none will make God the author of it, is nevertheless, made subservient to the promotion of God's glory. And this is among the highest proofs of God's sovereignty. When God makes good spring out of evil; and that, which in itself strikes deepest against the LORD'S glory, even sin, is ultimately made, by his overruling wisdom, and power, to produce the very reverse to what is intended by Satan. This manifests a divine hand, and is to the LORD'S praise!

The principal feature in the great points of our holy faith, is of this kind; and beautifully illustrates the whole. The Church, during her time-state falling into sin, and, consequently, sorrow; only afforded a better opportunity for the manifestation of CHRIST'S love. JESUS had married her from all eternity. And, when he married her, she was presented to him, in all that original glory and holiness in himself, which she had derived from him, and in which she appeared most lovely before him. When, therefore, CHRIST'S Church falls, as she did immediately fall, soon after creation, into sin, and sorrow; this afforded a blessed occasion to her Husband to bring her out of both. And which he did, most completely and effectually. And this is what *Paul* calls, *the exceeding riches of his grace*; and fully proves, that all salvation is of grace, and the gift of

God. Not of works indeed; for the very idea, wholly sets aside free grace: but it is wholly of God. Yea, saith *Paul*, *we are his workmanship*. Beau tiful thought! because the whole Persons of the Godhead, concur in the gracious design; and, from the drawings of the Father, the manifestations of the Son, in his visits to his people; and the indwelling residence of the Holy Ghost, the best, yea, the only way, of securing the fruits and effects of the Holy Ghost, is most effectually provided for!

Ephesians 2:11-18

(11) ¶ Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; (12) That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: (13) But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. (14) ¶ For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; (15) Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; (16) And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: (17) And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. (18) For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

I cannot sufficiently admire, neither sufficiently recommend, to myself, and Reader, the blessedness of this sweet advice of the Apostle's. Apostle's, did I say, nay, it is God the Holy Ghost, which so tenderly, and affectionately recommends the Church, to remember her former state, when in unregeneracy, and her present state, when brought nigh, by the blood of CHRIST. And, therefore, blessed Spirit of all grace, give me grace, to keep in remembrance this precious teaching of thine?

First: the LORD bids the Church to remember, what they once were, when in a state of unawakened nature, and *dead in trespasses and sins*. The Church at *Ephesus*, *Paul* reminds them, were Gentiles, not as a nation only, for in this sense they were Gentiles still; but when without CHRIST, and strangers to the Covenants of promise. In short, as far remote from any apprehension of the nature and being of God, as the brute that perisheth. Reader! pause over this account. Nothing serves more to magnify the riches of God's grace, than when the LORD displays it, on such characters. And may not you, and I, take to ourselves, in the recollection of the days of our unregeneracy, what *Paul* once said to the *Corinthian* Church, when speaking of the same things? *And such* (said he) *were some of you!* And, oh! how blessed, if to us may be said, what followed. *But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified; in the name of the LORD JESUS, and by the Spirit of our God.* 1 Corinthians 6:11.

Reader! let you and I take to ourselves what is commanded. It will be always profitable, to remember, *the wormwood, and the gall*, of a state of unregenerated nature. To look to *the rock whence we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence we were digged*. Isaiah 51:1. Oh! what a stranger was I to God, and to CHRIST, all the long time of my unregeneracy? Stranger to the word of his grace, to the sweet sound of salvation yea, a stranger to my own heart; unconscious of the want of CHRIST; ignorant of the love of God; and, like this Church of *Ephesus*, when first *Paul* came among them, I had never so much as heard, as to any saving knowledge in the soul, whether there was any Holy Ghost. Acts 19:2. Reader! what are your views of these things?

But, *secondly*. *Paul* sweetly adds: *but now in CHRIST JESUS, ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of CHRIST.* For

He is our peace! I pray the Reader to mark, with suitable observation, the whole cause of the Church's recovery. All *in* CHRIST. All *by* CHRIST: and wholly for CHRIST'S sake. Here *Paul* evidently runs back, to the first, and original thought, with which he opened this Epistle. *Chosen in* CHRIST: *adopted*, and *predestinated*, to a son-ship in CHRIST to *himself*: and accepted in CHRIST: and all to the praise of the glory of his grace. And, what I pray the Reader not to lose sight of is the very sweet close of this paragraph: that *through Him*, that is, CHRIST, *we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father!* There is not, as far as I recollect, a verse in the Bible, so short as this, where the office-characters of the Three glorious Persons of the Godhead, are so sweetly joined together, and brought within so narrow a compass. And yet, what can more fully show, the constant access the children of God have always to the throne, in, and through CHRIST, when God the Spirit leads, and *directs the heart into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for CHRIST?*

Reader! do not dismiss this blessed portion of the chapter, before that you have gathered one or two sweet improvements, which, under the LORD'S teaching, it brings with it.

First. The remembrance of our former state of unawakened nature, while it tends to keep our souls low in the dust before God, will always at the same time, heighten our views of the divine mercy: The one acts in opposition to the other. That I, who, as *Paul* said of himself, was once a blasphemer, persecutor, injurious; should obtain mercy! Oh! what sweet encouragement to all that hear of it!

Secondly. And, while it acts as a motive to encourage others, what strength it brings with it to all future acts of faith in ourselves? If I found grace, the poor sinner may say, when dead in trespasses

and sins, what may I not hope for now, amidst all my own dying frames, and circumstances? It was nothing but grace then; and why not grace now? If when dead I was quickened; now when brought low, will not the LORD help me?

Thirdly. Nothing will more powerfully tend, under the LORD's blessing, to hide all pharisaical pride from the eyes, and to keep open a constant spring of true humbleness and sorrow, than the remembrance of what we once were, and what through grace we now are. Oh! when our mercies, and especially our spiritual mercies, are traced to their source, and the free, unmerited, unlooked for, yet untaught of love of God, is seen, in all our path along, from first to last; how low the child of God lays before God; how small his own attainments, and how high he values divine mercies in CHRIST!

And, *lastly*, to mention no more; (though many more might be added:) what views will the child of God have, of the Person, love, grace, blood-shedding, and righteousness, of JESUS CHRIST, who unceasingly remembers his former ruined, and undone state, out of CHRIST; and his present everlastingly blessed; and secure state, in CHRIST? Oh! the preciousness of JESUS, when the daily sense, of a daily need of JESUS, is felt in the soul.

Ephesians 2:19-22

(19) Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; (20) And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; (21) In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: (22) In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Let the Reader observe, how delightfully the Apostle calls off the attention of the Church, from what they once was, to what they now are. No more strangers, but friends: no more foreigners, but fellow-

citizens; made free of that city *whose builder and maker is God*. Oh! what trouble, and vexation, men of this world have, in their freedom as they call it, of the perishing cities of the earth. Here is an inheritance, in the citizenship of heaven, yea, the household of God. And all such are in sweet communion and fellowship with the Father, and with his Son JESUS CHRIST. No strangers to the love of God, to the Person, glory, and grace, of CHRIST; nor to the regenerating, renewing influences, of God the Holy Ghost. Oh! the felicity, even now, of an heir of heaven! Oh! the glory, that soon shall be revealed!

But the Apostle proceeds. *Ye are built (saith he) upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST himself being the chief corner stone*. Yes! built upon the same foundation, as the Apostles and Prophets. *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, JESUS CHRIST*. 1 Corinthians 3:11. God the Father laid this foundation-stone in *Zion*. Isaiah 28:16. And, both the Prophets of the Old Testament, and the Apostles of the New, acted only as servants in building the Church, on this Rock of Ages. Neither the persons, nor the doctrines, of the Apostles, and Prophets, are the foundation; but CHRIST in their doctrines: and, therefore, said to be their foundation.

I beg the Reader to observe with me, how blessedly *Paul* introduceth the whole Three Persons of the Godhead, as concerned, and engaged, in this building. God the Father layeth the foundation. CHRIST is the foundation, and the Chief Corner Stone, to knit together the whole building. And the building is, for an habitation of God, through the Spirit.

It is probable, I think, that while *Paul* makes use of such a beautiful similitude, as that of a Temple, to teach the Church the

blessedness, of the LORD'S people forming one grand body, of a spiritual nature, as hereafter to be completed in heaven; he had in view, the magnificent building the *Ephesians* had erected, to the honor of their dunghill idol, *Diana*: which, we are told, was, in point of splendor, one of the world's wonders. It is, therefore, as if he had said: behold that superb structure! See how it is desecrated, to a mere idol! Then turn your thoughts, and contemplate that temple, which is founded on CHRIST, for an habitation of God, through the Spirit! And think, what unknown glories must result, from such an inhabitation, here in grace, and hereafter in glory! 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.

If the Reader will indulge me but a few moments longer, on this sweet subject, I will venture, under the hope of divine grace, to touch at the outlines of it, with reverence, and godly fear. More than the out lines, I cannot propose. We must be favored, both Writer and Reader of this *Poor Man's Commentary*, with the vision *John* had, and see what he saw, and hear what he heard, before we can go further into the subject. *He saw* (he tells us) *the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband.* And, he heard a great voice out of heaven, saying: *behold, the taber nacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them.* Revelation 21:2, 3. But, though we neither hear, nor see, in visions, *as John did*; we derive instructions, under God the Spirit's teaching, from what he saw, and heard, for he was directed, to make known the revelation to the Churches. And the LORD JESUS, who sent his servant, pro nounced a blessedness on those, who read, and hear, the words of his prophecy. Revelation 1:1, 11. and 3.

The first, and great, and ultimate object, which I beg the Reader. everlastingly to keep in view, as he ponders this beautiful similitude

of the Apostle, is, that the glorious structure is the joint result of the Holy Three IN One, as hath been before noticed. How blessedly doth JEHOVAH, in his Personalities, endear himself to the hearts of his people, by such united views, of his love, and grace and favor, towards the Church in CHRIST! Surely it is, that his people might have somewhat in their apprehensions, to lean upon, in their drawing nigh to the LORD, for communion in, and with, and by, CHRIST. Without this, in discovering the special acts of grace, from each glorious Person in the Godhead, the soul would be overwhelmed, and lost, in the contemplation of the divine essence!

When the Reader hath duly pondered these things, I would beg him to, consider also, the proposed object of this spiritual building, which is said to be *for an habitation of God through the Spirit*. And, as the whole efficiency of the work, is now with the Spirit; we are here plainly taught, that it is to his Almighty agency, the whole structure is committed; and from his sovereignty in the communications of grace, from first to last, the whole building must be formed. If the Church of God, in the present day, was more alive to the apprehension of the Person, and Godhead, and work, and offices of God the Holy Ghost; how would the minds, both of ministers and people, be waiting for his directions, in all the several means of grace, that they might hear, before they entered upon them, and as they passed through them, *what the Spirit saith unto the Churches!*

That God the Holy Ghost is the Almighty Founder and Architect, of the whole spiritual building, is too plain a truth, to require arguments to establish. His is the whole Scripture, for the edification of the Church. His every dispensation in ordinances. His, the whole appointment of sacrifices. For when the High Priest went once every year with blood, into the holy place, we are told, that the Holy

Ghost hereby signified his intentions by that service, See HEBREWS 9:6, 7, 8. And, as the several ordinances, and means of grace, are of his express appointment; so the blessed effects intended from them, in spiritual fruits, are wholly his gift. It is He which lays the foundation of the temple, in the hearts of the LORD'S people, by quickening, and regenerating the dead in trespasses and sins. He carries on the work, from grace to grace, in the soul. He it is which forms CHRIST in the heart, *the hope of glory*. In short, the LORD the Spirit is the founder, builder, and finisher, of the whole spiritual temple: and He, which enables the *lively stones to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by JESUS CHRIST*. 1 Peter 2:5. *All these worketh that one, and the self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will*. I Corinthians 12:11. Reader! ponder well the vast subject. It is indeed, too vast, too sublime, for the perfect apprehension of our unripe faculties. But, when the LORD shall bring home his glorious Church, from earth, to heaven; and present it to himself, a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, nor any such thing, but to be holy, and without blemish; and the whole building is fully prepared, in body, soul, and spirit, for the everlasting glory of God in CHRIST: then will it be, indeed, for an habitation of God through the Spirit! Oh! God the Holy Ghost! do thou build up thy people, in the LORD our righteousness. Make our bodies thy temple: and direct the hearts of all thy redeemed, *into the love of God, and patient waiting for CHRIST!*

REFLECTIONS

READER! while you, and I, hear what God the Spirit hath here said, to the Church at *Ephesus*; can we both, from the same divine assurance, say: the LORD hath quickened us, who were by nature, *dead in trespasses and sins*? Can we look back, and remember,

how *the prince of the power of the air*, once wrought in our mind, as he doth now, *in the children of disobedience*? Had we our conversation in times past with such, and when we were dead in sins, were we quickened together with CHRIST? Oh! what a melting sense ought we to have, of divine mercies, in calling to mind, what we once were; and what, through grace, we now are? Oh! the blessedness of ascribing all to grace, and giving to God all the glory. And, must it not be God's workmanship, and not our's? Hath not God ordained all our works in us, and made both the preparation, and the performance of them, his own? And shall we seek acceptance in them, when they are not our's; or expect to be saved by them, when we are wholly saved in the LORD?

Precious LORD JESUS! It is thou, and thou alone, which hast brought us nigh by thy blood, when we were afar off, and enemies to God, by wicked works! Oh! LORD, keep us ever nigh, by thy power; that through Thee, we may always have access, by One Spirit unto the Father!

LORD! bless thy whole building the Church, in heaven, and earth; all founded on CHRIST, and all one in CHRIST. Dwell in thy mystical body thy temple, and make it by grace, a suited habitation for thy self: Father, Son, and Spirit, both here, and hereafter! Amen.

CHAPTER 3

CONTENTS

The Apostle in this chapter, makes a particular address to the Church at Ephesus, as a Gentile church. He shows the gracious design of GOD from the Beginning, to the Gentiles, as one with the Jews in CHRIST. He closeth in Prayer.

EPHESIANS 3:1-2

- (1) ¶ For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,
(2) If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

It is more than probable, that at the time *Paul* wrote this. Epistle, he was literally a prisoner at *Rome*. But the Apostle delighted to consider himself, in one and the same moment, the LORD'S prisoner, and the LORD'S freeman. The LORD'S chains are golden chains. And, it was *Paul's* most fervent desire, that he might lay hold of CHRIST, as CHRIST had laid hold of him. This was his daily striving. Philippians 3:12. Reader! how different the state, between the prisoner of JESUS, and the prisoner to sin and Satan!

EPHESIANS 3:3-6

- (3) How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, (4) Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) (5) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; (6) That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

The Apostle, no doubt, when speaking of having written to them before, alludes to the first Chapter particularly in this Epistle, in which he hath treated of those mysterious doctrines, of election, predestination, the acceptance of the Church in CHRIST, before the foundation of the world; together with redemption by CHRIST, and regeneration by the Spirit, during the time-state of the Church. But, what I would yet more particularly desire the Reader to regard, in this statement of *Paul*, is, what he saith in relation to, the mystery of these grand things being kept secret in times past, compared to the revelation now made, unto the Apostles, and Prophets, by the Spirit. The Jews knew nothing of God's design, in relation to the Gentiles. Though, had they understood their own Scriptures, they

would have discovered, that, from the beginning, the Church of God was One, and that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs of the same body. CHRIST'S Church could be but one. And CHRIST himself the One Head, and Husband of his body the Church; and JEHOVAH'S salvation to the ends of the earth. Isaiah 49:6. Song Of Solomon 6:9. But, until the ascension of CHRIST, and the descension of the Holy Ghost; these glorious truths, were not so openly revealed, as they, were then by the Spirit.

EPHESIANS 3:7-12

(7) Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. (8) Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; (9) And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: (10) To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, (11) According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: (12) In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

Reader! You and I may pause a moment to admire the grace given to this great Apostle, who, while we behold him as an eminent servant, of the LORD, he considered himself as less than the least of all saints; yea, the chief of sinners! 1 Timothy 1:15. Grace always humbles. The higher a child of God is advanced *in* divine knowledge, the lower he lays before God in humility. The more he limits of CHRIST, the more contemptible he thinks of himself But profitable as such views are of God's best servants, the subject *Paul* is here upon, is too sublime, to lose a moment in looking at the servant, while we hear of the Person, and unsearchable riches of the Master. *Paul* calls it a mystery, and the fellowship of the mystery. And what a mystery, indeed, the whole forms? Great is the mystery of godliness. God, *manifest in the flesh*, is the first chapter. And

what an endless subject, of the unsearchable riches of CHRIST, doth this one open? It contains depths of wisdom, and depths of love, which, like an ocean without bottom or shore, affords infinite scope for all God's intelligent creatures, to exercise their faculties, in sailing over, but never fully to explore, for it passeth all knowledge. Nevertheless, the LORD encourageth his people to enter upon the discovery, in that we are told, that though from the beginning of the world it was hid in God, who created all things by JESUS CHRIST; yet, is it now made known to the Church. And, however, still hid *from the wise and prudent*, it is revealed onto the saints. *The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him, and he will show them his Covenant.* Psalm 25:14. A few of the more prominent parts of this mystery, as here opened by the Apostle, we shall do well to regard, the LORD being our Teacher.

And, *first*. The Apostle tells us, that before God went forth in acts of creation, when he created all things by JESUS CHRIST, the fellowship of this mystery had been hid in his bosom, and, of consequence, it was unknown to angels. It was an eternal purpose, which he purposed in CHRIST JESUS our LORD. So that there was none privy to it but God himself, in his threefold character of Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And herein became the greatest, if not the first discovery, of the Personalities in the Godhead. For, although at Creation we find the Sacred Three in One, speaking on the subject of creation to one another, at the forming man, saying, *Let us make man in our Image, after our Likeness;* Genesis 1:26. yet, it was at the revelation concerning the LORD JESUS, *as the manifold wisdom of God*, that we find the blessed discovery of the Holy Three in One becoming witnesses in heaven to these great truths. 1 John 5:7. And I would ask the Reader, (but not speak decidedly,) do we not discover those heavenly witnesses, when, as in this very Epistle to

the Church, we read of God the Father's *choosing* the Church, God the Son's *redeeming* the Church, and God the Spirit's *regenerating* the Church, as so many distinct and personal acts in this mystery? Yea, are not these as so many blessed discoveries afforded us, that we might have somewhat to form to ourselves, suited apprehensions, both of the Personality, and of the love and favor of God, in this threefold character of Being. Chap. 1:4-9.

No doubt, when God went, forth in acts of creation, he made a vast display of his divine perfections. In all those works we behold a proof of them. And, although, in respect to his own eternal glory, there needed no such manifestations, resting in his own unchangeable complacency, and being infinitely blessed, had men or angels never been called into being; yet, when the LORD was pleased to raise up such magnificent works of his hands, the contemplation of them called forth his praise, when, as we are told, *the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.* Job 38:7. But when CHRIST, as God-man, came to be revealed to the Church, and all the great events included in that high administration of his Person, offices, and character, were unfolded to view; here was discovered such unsearchable riches proclaimed *the manifold wisdom of God.* The very Person of CHRIST alone, in the union of his double nature, God and Man in One, opened such an object of glory to feast our ravished souls upon, as in himself, and independent of any one act of love and grace towards his Church and people, as her Savior and Redeemer, was enough to produce the highest sensations of joy to all eternity. And when to the view of his Person, as God-man, we add the gracious offices of the Mediator, when we not only consider Him as He is in himself; but as He is to his people; what he hath done for us, and what he is to us; what he was in his relation to his Church, as her Head and

Husband, before all worlds; what he is, as her Surety, Redeemer, High Priest, and Advocate, during the whole of her time-state while on earth; and what he will be, when he will bring home his Church, as her LORD, to be one with him to all eternity: these views leave at an infinite distance every other, and open, even now, though in the present unripe state of our being, we can only behold objects, as through mediums darkly; *a joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*

But, Reader! let You and I seek for grace rightly, to value our mercies. *Angels*, we are told, when this eternal purpose, which God purposed in CHRIST, came to be opened were amazed at the vast discovery, and unable to comprehend such depths of the manifold wisdom of God, *desired to look into. Holy men, and Prophets*, though taught by the Spirit of CHRIST, which was in them, to enquire and search diligently concerning this salvation, were unconscious of what was meant by the sufferings of CHRIST, and the glory that should follow; but it was revealed unto them, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are *now* reported unto us by them. 1 Peter 1:11, 12. And while we daily behold the truths of God confirmed, that *the world by wisdom knew not* God; the LORD'S people are blessed in the saving knowledge of them by the Spirit. According to this sweet scripture, it is said, that God's intent now is, that *it might be known by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God*. So, that *the mystery which hath been hid from ages, and from generations, is now made manifest to the saints. Colossians 1:26*. Well may every child of God cry out with the Apostle, *Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. 2 Corinthians 9:15.*

Ephesians 3:13-21

(13) Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. (14) ¶ For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our

Lord Jesus Christ, (15) Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, (16) That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; (17) That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; (19) And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. (20) Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, (21) Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

I include all that remains in this Chapter under one view, because the several parts are woven into one piece, and form a beautiful whole. The Apostle begins the paragraph with desiring that the Church would lose sight of everything which related to his personal state and circumstances. That he was a prisoner, it was true; but, at the same time, he was the LORD'S free man. And though, the enemy shut him in, yet no enemy could shut the LORD out. And, as to his afflictions, they were all sanctified. And, as the LORD sweetened them to his soul, they ought to be the subject of real joy to their hearts. Having thus dispatched all consideration as to himself, he now proceeds to show them the affection he had for them in his heart, and how he was continually employed for them. It forms a lovely representation of the faithful pastor and minister of CHRIST'S flock, and serves at least to show what such *should be*, though, it is to be feared, few *are so*, in the present awful day of a declining ministry.

He *first* tells them, that he *bowed* his knees unto the God and Father of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, as the Father of the whole family of CHRIST, in heaven and in earth. There is somewhat very blessed in this. God the Father is, indeed, in *every* sense of the word, the God and Father of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. For He is revealed, under this character, in the Scriptures of truth. This is the name, in

the essential nature of the Godhead, as One of the Holy Three which bear record in heaven. It is his name also in the economy of the Covenant of grace. And it is his name as the God the Father of the Church, for it is He who hath given the Church to CHRIST *before the foundation of the world*. *Ephesians* 1:4. JESUS sweetly speaks of this as his particular pleasure and delight. *John* 17:6. Well might *Paul*, therefore, say that of Him, the whole family in heaven and earth is named. And well might he bow the knee before Him. I also would say, LORD! bow the knee of my heart before Him, who is the God and Father of our LORD JESUS CHRIST! Oh! that I may know thee, the only true God, and JESUS CHRIST whom thou hath sent. *John* 17:3.

Secondly. What a blessed prayer this is? *Paul* having mentioned his adorable name, before whom he bent the knee, next seeks strength and grace from God the Holy Ghost, for forming all his of prayers aright, and for helping him in his infirmities of prayer, that he might make all his supplications according to the will of God. How truly Scriptural this is? *Paul* well knew, that without the influences of the Spirit, he could neither know how to pray, nor what to pray for. Neither prayers could he present, nor praises offer, until God the Spirit taught him. To God, therefore, he looks for those influences. And he felt full confidence, that the LORD would grant him, according to his riches in glory, grace to be so strengthened, that his inner man would find, the blessed, communications of the Spirit to this end.

And what was the great subject of his prayer. It was short, but comprehensive. It all centered in CHRIST. All *Paul* prayed for himself; and all he asked for the Church, was CHRIST. CHRIST and his fullness, CHRIST and his all-sufficiency. *That* CHRIST (said he) *may dwell in your hearts by faith*. Reader! do not overlook the fullness

and comprehensiveness of *Paul's* prayer. CHRIST cannot dwell in the heart of the unregenerate. CHRIST cannot dwell in the heart of any whom the Father hath not given to his dear Son. So, that in every heart where CHRIST dwells, there the LORD hath given testimony, that that precious soul is a child of God, given by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and regenerated by the Holy Ghost. Reader! is it not your prayer, as it is mine, that CHRIST may dwell in our hearts by faith?

And where CHRIST dwells in the heart by faith, there all the other blessings follow. Rooted in CHRIST, we are one with CHRIST. Grounded in love, we feel all the sweet influences of love. And, though the love of CHRIST is unsearchable, and past finding out, yet we can in some measure comprehend, that it reacheth from one eternity to, another; and though its dimensions are infinite, in breadth and length, and depth, and height, and it is a love which passeth knowledge, yet is it a special, peculiar, free, and gracious love, and runs through all time, and to all eternity, to his people. Oh! the love of CHRIST, which passeth knowledge! Reader! what are your apprehensions of this love? Hath *Paul's* prayer been heard for you? Hath God granted you a token of this love?

The Apostle's prayer in recommendation of the Church to God, and his referring all unto him, that is alone able to answer it, is very striking and beautiful. The ability of God, not only to answer, but to exceed all beyond thought or expression, is most just and true. Oh! who shall say what God can perform? Who shall limit the Holy One of Israel! Reader! You and I may safely refer all to Him, and leave all with Him. He that hath given the greatest of all possible gifts, what can he, what will he not give? Well might the same Apostle elsewhere say, *For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.* Romans 11:40.

REFLECTIONS

WHAT cause of thankfulness hath the Church of God to offer, that the gracious purpose of JEHOVAH, hid in his breast from the beginning of the world, unknown to Angels, and principalities, and powers; should be so fully and openly revealed to the LORD'S people; yea, while the world knoweth it not, because it knew him not in whom it is hid; is made known to the saints and household of God! Oh! the blessedness of being made acquainted with the love, the everlasting love of God the Father, in his counsel, purpose, and will, in his grace to the Church! And, oh! the blessedness, that all the revelations of his love should be made known to us in the Person, and flow to us from the mediation of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, through the Spirit! Surely, every mercy becomes a tenfold mercy, coming to the Church, as the whole doth in, and through CHRIST. LORD! give all thy redeemed grace to bend the knee, as *Paul* did before the God and Father of the whole family, that we *may be able to comprehend with all saints, all the vast dimensions of the love of CHRIST, which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fullness of God!*

CHAPTER 4

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In this Chapter the Apostle considereth the Oneness and Unity of the Church in CHRIST. He sweetly sheweth how, as one Body, the Church is supplied with every suited Grace to each Member. He closeth in an Exhortation to Love and Concord.

EPHESIANS 4:1-6

(1) ¶ I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, (2) ¶ With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; (3) Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (4) *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;* (5) One Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.

It is truly blessed always to trace effects to their cause. The Apostle having opened this chapter in a word of exhortation, takes effectual care at the same time, to show the Church how, and by what means, the blessed properties he recommends are to be accomplished. Not in any strength of our own, but from the gracious *influences* of the Spirit. It is well worthy the Reader's observation, that all the exhortations of the Gospel, are accompanied with this direction, that we may always seek strength in divine help, and trust not to human weakness. There is no possibility of mortifying the deeds of the flesh, but by the Spirit's strength. *Paul* knew this, and was as highly taught it as any man. And, therefore, he saith, *I can do nothing of myself. But I can do all things through CHRIST, who strengtheneth me.* Reader! it is blessed to know our own nothingness, that we may the more highly prize the LORD'S all-sufficiency.

I desire the Reader's close attention to the beautiful account the Apostle hath here drawn of the Oneness and Unity of CHRIST and his Church. He takes up the figure of an human body by way of describing the whole, taken collectively as One, and the several parts which make up the individual members of it. And he draws from the whole the just and proper influence, which cannot but arise out of it, to the mutual comfort and welfare of all when the subject is considered in this oneness of character.

The Church is but One great whole. CHRIST is the glorious Head. Every member is united to him, and to each other. So that they are knit in one, all intimately linked in one common interest, and alike concerned for the happiness of each other.

But what I more particularly beg the Reader to remark in this place, (because it is what the Apostle is more particularly noting,) is, that while the whole Church of God, in all the variety of the members of it, forms but one, the Holy Ghost is the great source giving life to all He who anointed and filled the Head, is the same which anoints and fills the members. And, this is one of the most blessed of all thoughts. Though You or I have ever so small portions of grace, yet what we have comes from the same Almighty Giver, and is part of the same nature in grace, as the Holy Ghost communicated to CHRIST himself. In Him, as a fountain. In us, his members as streams. For the Father gave not the Spirit *by measure unto, him*, John 3:34. *But unto every one of us is given grace, according unto the measure of the gift of CHRIST.* Reader! do not for a moment lose sight of this! For what can be more blessed? The same Spirit which dwelt in CHRIST's heart when on earth; yea, which dwells in CHRIST'S heart now in heaven, (for it would be little short of blasphemy to say, that the Spirit which JEHOVAH said rested upon him, is departed from him. Isaiah 11:2.) dwells in ours. When once the LORD the Spirit, hath regenerated our spirit, there the LORD dwells for ever. For so CHRIST said, *He shall abide with you for ever.* John 14:16. So then the whole Church, when brought into spiritual union by the new-birth, with CHRIST the glorious Head, and with each other as members of his body; is actuated by the same Spirit, and made partaker of the same grace, however variously given by that Almighty LORD, *who divideth to every man severally as he will.* 1 Corinthians 12:11. Reader! pause over the sweet

consideration, and ponder it well. How can a child of God do otherwise than well, be his exercises whatever they may, when he considers that while the same Spirit which dwells in us, dwells in CHRIST, acts in Him, and from Him in us; and the very prayers the LORD the Spirit teaches CHRIST'S members to put up before the mercy-seat here on earth, are so many responses and echos to the intercession of CHRIST in heaven! Romans 8:26, 27.

I will detain the Reader no longer on this most blessed passage, than just to observe how blessedly the Holy Ghost is for ever teaching the Church the grand fundamental doctrine of all our faith, the unity of the Divine essence, existing in a threefold character of Person. One God, Father, Son, and Spirit, is manifested by the oneness of design and agency, in all the revelations which JEHOVAH hath been pleased to make of himself. And the LORD makes a yet further display of himself, in the several revelations by which, his people shall know him, in being *the God and Father of all* because all acts of his are in a fatherly way. He hath from everlasting chosen the Church in CHRIST, predestinated the Church to a sonship in CHRIST, and brought all the children into their adoption-character in CHRIST. Hence he is known by them under those divine distinctions, as *above all* being not only great and Almighty in their view, but *above all* in their affections, and praise, and delight. He *is through all*, for whatever blessings they receive of temporals, spirituals, and eternals, they eye Him through all. And he is *in all*, for, from the first call of awakening grace, until grace is finished in glory, they behold Him as the great Author. Pardoning, justifying, sanctifying grace, are given to every one of CHRIST'S mystical members, according to the measure of the gift of CHRIST. What a blessed view the whole opens!

EPHESIANS 4:7-13

(7) But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (8) Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (9) (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? (10) He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) (11) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (12) For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: (13) Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:

Every verse here is a sermon, and full of the most blessed heads of discourse. Oh! that God the Holy Ghost, the Almighty Preacher of it, may again preach the whole life-giving contents to my soul, and engraft them there. If the Reader hath My *Poor Man's Commentary* by him on the Psalms, he will find some few observations on the some Scripture, from whence the first of the verses here is taken. Psalm 68:18. In addition, let me beg him to remark, how blessedly, CHRIST'S triumph in our nature is celebrated, and the blessed effects which followed. In the original Scripture, it is said, that he *received* gifts. Yes! CHRIST had not then accomplished redemption-work. But here the Apostle celebrates the thing done. Now it is said, he *gave* them, JESUS had now returned to glory, and, therefore, all his ascension-gifts were sent down, And let not the Reader for a moment overlook, that the whole is spoken of JESUS in our nature. For his ascension implied, his descension. CHRIST is the same identical Person, who from everlasting, stood up the Covenant-head of his body the Church, *when his delights were with the sons of men*. Proverbs 8:22, 23 &c. Hence descension, therefore, preceded his ascension, and both proved his identity. But I refer the Reader, on this point, to the *Poor Man's Commentary*. John 3:13.

One part, connected with this subject, I must not suffer to escape, until that I have first called the Reader's attention to it. I mean the very blessed, and most interesting record here given of CHRIST'S ascension in our nature, that *he might fill all things*. The Holy Ghost had before recorded in the sixty-eighth Psalm, that what CHRIST received when he led captivity captive, he received in the man, that is, in his human nature, as the man, the God-man CHRIST JESUS.

Now it is the sweetest and most interesting of all subjects, the contemplation of the Son of God in our nature, JESUS still wears our nature in heaven. When he ascended, he ascended in our nature. And all he received, he received in our nature, on purpose that he might convey his mercies, gifts, and graces, to a nature like his own. Hence, this was one reason, among others, wherefore he took into union with his divine nature the human nature, that the communications might be natural. Add to these, in the Son of God assuming our nature, it qualified him for the office of a Mediator, and High Priest. Not to inform him what we are, for by his Godhead he knew this. But by a fellow feeling, that he might enter into all our concerns, and give him a pity that is natural, and which might sympathize with the nature he relieved. How sweet is it thus to view JESUS, in all his offices, and characters, and relations!

I do not think it necessary to offer any observations on the diversity of appointments in the Church, neither of the various qualifications with which the several departments are distinguished. These are all sufficiently obvious to need nothing explanatory. But I venture to make one remark from the whole, which it were to be wished was more seriously regarded. I mean, that in all the appointments, whether Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, or Teachers, all had their appointment and their qualification from the LORD. What would have been thought, in the days of the Apostles, and in the

forming of the Church, if men uncalled by the LORD, and unordained by the Holy Ghost, had rushed into the ministry? Who would have dared to have taken upon him either of those offices, so soon after the descent of God the Holy Ghost, without hearing somewhat like the voice, saying, *Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them!* Acts 13:2. Could it ever have entered into the minds of the Apostles of CHRIST, that the days would come in the Church of CHRIST, when men, ignorant of the very Being of God the Holy Ghost, would declare themselves moved with the Holy Ghost, to take upon them the sacred office for the sake of filthy lucre?

Readers do not fail to take with you the great and important design, for which the LORD the Spirit hath established a standing ministry in his Church. It is for the perfecting of the saints, for establishing the whole mystical body of CHRIST, in CHRIST, their glorious head. Nothing, under the LORD'S teaching, can more contribute to this, than the ministry of the word and ordinances. And when the LORD causeth his people to assemble together, and He comes himself in the midst of them, everything is made blessed and refreshing. I might appeal to every well organized Church Of the LORD JESUS upon earth in confirmation. There is, no leanness of soul, no spiritual want, nothing but life and prosperity where CHRIST visits his Churches. The body is, indeed, edified, *when the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush, dwells in the assembly of his saints.* That good will flows from his heart into the hearts, of his people, and the fragrancy and savor of CHRIST'S name, is *as ointment poured forth!* Deuteronomy 33:16. Song Of Solomon 1:3.

Ephesians 4:14-16

(14) That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and*

cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; (15) But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: (16) From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

By the similitude of children, whose teachable minds are easily led, the Apostle meant to show, that God's people are exempt from deception, when established in the grace that is in CHRIST JESUS. It is a blessed thing when taught of God. Divine teachings differ wholly from human. What we learn from men may be forgotten, may be contradicted, overruled, denied; so, that like children who are pleased with what they hear today, and may be displeased tomorrow; so, what is taken up upon trust, may be put down with the same. But when God is the Teacher, he teacheth powerfully, infallibly, savingly, and abidingly. Hence, one of old said, *I shall never forget thy word, for by it thou hast quickened me.* Psalm 119:93. And when from the true saving grace, which is imparted by God the Holy Ghost at regeneration, the child of God is brought into a life communion, as a member of CHRIST'S mystical body, he groweth up into him in all things, and deriving strength from Him which is the head, the whole, and every member become knit together as one complete whole, unto the general edifying of the body in love.

Ephesians 4:17-32

(17) ¶ This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, (18) Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: (19) Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. (20) But ye have not so learned Christ; (21) If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: (22) That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful

lusts; (23) And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; (24) And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (25) Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. (26) Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: (27) Neither give place to the devil. (28) Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. (29) Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. (30) And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. (31) Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: (32) And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

The Apostle hath here drawn a striking contrast between the men of the world and the godly, between *him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not*. The expressions are so plain, and the truth so very obvious, that I do not think it necessary to enlarge, upon the subject. The putting off the old man, and the putting on the new, very decidedly show the wonderful change wrought by regeneration. The old man is a strong phrase, to denote the corruption of our fallen state in *Adam*. And, in like manner, so is the new man in *CHRIST*. But the putting off the one, and putting on the other, is not man's work, but God's. We are altogether passive in the act of regeneration, as in the original generation. And I pray the Reader to remark yet further, what all the scripture of God teacheth, and what all the experience of the Church of God confirms; the old man, though put off, remains; not dead, but dying; not buried, but crucified. There is no change in the old man; he is the same old man of sin, wholly sin, and all sin, as ever. Hence *Paul* himself groaned, under the body of sin as long as he remained in the body. And hence he looked only to *JESUS* for deliverance. Romans 7:24, 25. And hence he told the Church: if *CHRIST be in*

you (said he) the body, is dead because of sin: but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness. Romans 7:10. Reader! if this were better understood than it is; and men, professing godliness, were better acquainted than they are with the plague of their own heart, we should not hear so much talking of inherent holiness in the creature, while they themselves daily, hourly, if they were to look more closely to what passeth in the old unrenewed nature of their own bodies, manifest that, in *them, that is in their flesh, dwelleth no good thing!*

On the other hand, putting on the new man, is neither their act, nor their merit. CHRIST is the new man, formed in the souls of the regenerate, by the Holy Ghost. And every child of God, at his new birth, is formed in CHRIST'S image, and CHRIST formed in his heart *the hope of glory.* Hence, united to his person, and having a spiritual union with him, quickened, and brought forth into life, which before was *dead in trespasses and sins*, the regenerated part the spirit, manifests, in all its breathings, desires, and longings after CHRIST, that CHRIST is its life, its portion, its one unceasing pursuit. The child of God, new born in CHRIST lives upon CHRIST, and lives to CHRIST. And JESUS saith: *because I live, ye shall live also.* Hence, while the Spirit is thus holy in CHRIST; and the flesh unholy, and nothing but corruption in nature; those opposite principles are perpetually producing those effects the children of God all feel, from such a conflict, and of which they continually complain, Romans 7:21, &c. Galatians 5:17. But most evident it is, that such, more or less, will continue through the whole time-state of the Church here below; and that this competition, in every child of God's own person, from the moment of regeneration, never ceaseth, neither can cease, until the body returns to its original dust, and, the spirit joins *the spirits of just men made perfect.*

I pause a moment over the verse, in which the Apostle cautions the Church, to an holy weariness against grieving the Holy Spirit of God. And what a blessed thing was it in the LORD, that his servant should add, *whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption*. How sweetly gracious was it to hold up the sorrowful soul of a child of God, that would rather die than grieve that Almighty LORD by whose regenerating grace he was first quickened into spiritual life; I say how sweetly gracious was it in the LORD, to assure the timid soul, that amidst all his unworthiness, and backslidings, and departures, the sealing of the Holy Ghost could not lose its efficacy. Oh! Reader! what shall speak his praise, that though we so often change, our God changeth not. Malachi 3:6. Though we fail in our love, JESUS faileth not in his. Our interest in the Covenant arose, not from our obedience; but in God's purposes, and CHRIST'S merits and blood. The everlasting worth and efficacy of CHRIST'S ransom, pleads more for his redeemed than all their sins plead against them. Unworthy as they are in themselves, yet are they everlastingly accepted in the Beloved. And this sweet scripture settles the point: *they are sealed unto the day of redemption*.

Nevertheless, the Child of God knows, to his sorrow, when the body of sin breaks out into some new transgression the awfulness of the offence. And that solemn scripture conies home directed to the heart, by the LORD in great poignancy of affliction. *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee. Know, therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing, and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the LORD God of hosts!* See Psalm 36:1. Reader! if you are a child of God, and renewed by sovereign grace; I need not tell you what these Scriptures mean. You know them, and feel them; and from a conscious sense of the indwelling corruption of nature,

you can best say how much you dread the very apprehension of grieving the Holy Spirit! But oh! thou Holy God! when I call to mind what a mass of sin and transgression my whole unrenewed nature is, how am I lost in amazement at thine unchanging love, that while thou makest the bodies of thy people thy temple, so much of evil dwells there. If *Lot* was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked from day to day, what must be the feeling of God the Holy Ghost, at the daily view of indwelling corruption, and out-breaking sin, in his redeemed ones? LORD, I pray thee! keep thy servant from presumptuous sins! And do thou, O LORD, (for thou truly canst accomplish it,) mortify all the corrupt thoughts and deeds of my body, that I may never grieve thee, by whom I am sealed, *unto the day of redemption!*

The Apostle sweetly closeth the Chapter, in calling upon the Church to the exercise of the fruits of the Spirit, instead of grieving Him. And, he adopts the strongest, and most persuasive of all arguments, to a tender-hearted deportment, among the people of God, when holding forth, as a model of everything that is lovely in mutual forbearance, and charity, he proposeth to their view that LORD JESUS. Oh! what a volume of motives, ariseth from the Person of CHRIST! And how strong the appeal in God's forgiving the Church for CHRIST'S sake, doth it come home to the heart, to the brethren, to forgive one another?

REFLECTIONS

READER! pause over the very blessed things contained In this Chapter, in setting forth the oneness and unity in CHRIST, and his Church. And then say, what powerful persuasions are continually arising from thence, that there should be one heart, and one affection, in everything which can contribute to the spiritual union,

among the people. If one God and Father, one LORD JESUS CHRIST, one Holy Ghost, one Church, one faith, one baptism of the Spirit; how can it be otherwise, while under the sweet and gracious influences of those principles, but that oneness of affection, like a golden chain, must link the whole together; and the whole Church of God, be as *brethren, dwelling together in unity!*

Blessed be the glorious Head of his Church, who hath sent down his ascension-gifts upon his Church, and thereby manifested the fullest assurance, that redemption-work is finished. God the Father hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand: and sent down, according to his own most sure promise, the Holy Ghost, And God the Holy Ghost hath graciously given his gifts, to every man, severally as he will! LORD! let the whole manifestations, whether to Apostles, or Prophets, or Evangelists or Pastors, or Preachers, be accompanied with thy blessing! Let the work of the ministry, and the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of CHRIST, be carried on in the earth, until the whole Church be brought home to JESUS our perfection! And do thou, blessed Spirit, for to thee the blessed work belongs, do thou put off the *old man*, in all the LORD'S redeemed ones, and put on the *new man, which after God, is created in righteousness, and true holiness; for then shall we speak every man truth with his neighbor*. Then shall we not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption; but walk in love, as CHRIST also hath loved us; and forgive one another, as God for CHRIST'S sake, hath forgiven us.

CHAPTER 5

CONTENTS

The Apostle is still prosecuting the same Subject, as in the former upon the Church to follow God, under the Character of dear Children. He closeth his subject, in a most beautiful Representation of CHRIST, as the Head, and Husband, of His Body the Church.

EPHESIANS 5:1-13

(1) ¶ Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; (2) And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. (3) ¶ But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; (4) Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. (5) For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (6) Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. (7) Be not ye therefore partakers with them. (8) For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are* ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (9) (For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) (10) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. (11) And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*. (12) For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. (13) But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

I admire the very sweet, and interesting manner, with which the Holy Ghost, by his servant the Apostle, opens this Chapter. How affectionately the Church is called upon to follow God; and the way, in which they are to follow him. Not as children only, but as dear children. The expression is similar to the one used by our LORD in the days of his flesh, and upon the same occasion, when recommending his disciples to come to God, as their Father: *Shall not God avenge his own elect?* Not simply his elect, but his own elect. See Luke 18:1-7. and Commentary.

In order that the Reader may enter into the full apprehension of this very beautiful Scripture, of following God, as dear children; it will be proper for him to consider, in what terms, the Apostle entered on this Epistle. For, it should be always kept in remembrance, while reading the Epistles, that though divided into Chapters, they are, nevertheless, but one, and the same Epistle. Now, when the Apostle opened this Epistle to the Church, at *Ephesus* he began in an hymn of praise to God the Father, for his fatherly love, in *choosing* the Church in CHRIST, *predestinating* the Church to the adoption of children in CHRIST, and *accepting* the church in CHRIST. Hence, now, toward the conclusion of his Epistle, he reminds the Church of their relationship to God the Father, in CHRIST; and enjoins them to follow. God as dear children.

And as this is a point of infinite consequence in the life of a child of God; and yet, is not, I fear, as much considered by the Church of God in CHRIST, as it ought; I shall beg the freedom; to follow up what the Apostle hath here recommended, with a few observations. If I may judge of the general state of the Church by what comes within my own knowledge, I venture to believe, that the best saints alive, have too little actings of faith, upon the Person of God our Father, under this endeared and endearing character of Father. We lose sight of God's choice, and of God's predestinating us the adoption of children in CHRIST. The sweet *Abba* Father doth not dwell, as much as it ought, in our hearts, and upon our lips. Whereas if we kept in constant remembrance our birth-right, and the privileges arising out of it; should we not follow God as dear children; and go in, and out, the house of God, as our Father's house; and sit down in our place at his table, as his children; yea; as his *dear* children? Do earthly parents love to hear the voice of their little ones, as soon as they can lisp out father? And will not our

heavenly Father be pleased with the name, when taught by the Spirit to call him Abba Father? Yea, is it not, as well the duty, as the privilege of his children, his adopted children, in CHRIST JESUS, so to do?

But let us consider the subject a little more closely. When the Holy Ghost bids the Church be followers of God, as dear children; the LORD doth it, we may be sure, upon grounds of the most sure certainty. They are not only children, chosen of God before the foundation of the world, but *dear* children in CHRIST. And the scripture gives the most abundant proof of it. For, *first*: what higher proof can we have, than God the Father's giving them to his dear Son? One, in whom he declared himself well pleased, and his elect, in whom his soul delighteth. Had he not highly prized his children, would he have given them to JESUS, and thereby manifested such a testimony of his love? *Secondly*. He commanded CHRIST, as CHRIST, to love them. Not that CHRIST needed other motives, more than his own personal love to the Church, to love the Church when he gave himself for her redemption. But God the Father, in commanding his dear Son to love his brother, Leviticus 25:25, plainly testified his love of the Church. *Thirdly*, and yet more. God *so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end, that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*. John 3:16. And, the ultimate cause of all is, that he might adopt the Church *to himself*; for so the Apostle declares in the first Chapter, fifth verse. And who shall say, what this adoption of the Church, as children in JESUS CHRIST, in the fullest sense of the word means? Who shall explain the extent of the dedication of the Church to *himself*; or the extent of the love of God to the Church? Are they not then children, yea *dear* children, concerning whom such things are said? Nay, what dearness of affection must they

stand in to God, when JESUS himself, speaking to the Father concerning them, saith: *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou, hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.* John 17:23.

And, in what an high sense, God's children, yea, God's *dear* children so loved, may be supposed to be followers of God; every part of Scripture testifies. As chosen, adopted, accepted, redeemed, justified, sanctified, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with CHRIST; *obedient children, not fashioning themselves according to the former lusts, in their ignorance; but as he which hath called them is holy, so, are they holy, in all manner of conversation.* They are in CHRIST; yea, one with CHRIST. In Him their holiness, their righteousness is found. 1 Peter 1:14, 15, 16. Isaiah 45:24. And hence their confidence, their joy, their peace, the assurance of the present, and ever lasting portion. Reader! behold the blessedness in being followers of God as dear children!

But, we must not stop here. We are said to *walk in love* as CHRIST *also hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savor!* How gracious was it in the Holy Ghost, to blend this love of CHRIST with the love, of the Father, that by both, under the blessed Spirit's influence, the Church might find everything that is persuasive, to a life of faith, in God the Father's love, and CHRIST'S redeeming grace, during the whole time-state of the Church. Surely no motives like these can be found to suppress, and keep under, all the idle, unprofitable, and sinful conversation, of our corrupt nature. And, where the Spirit's grace reigns in the heart, there will be the surest security to mortify both the words and deeds of the body, in living by him. But here I need not enlarge.

EPHESIANS 5:14

(14) Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

I pause over this verse. Who is the speaker but God the Spirit. And to whom doth the LORD speak but to the Church? The promise with which the verse ends, proves this. For to whom is CHRIST promised but to his Church, both Jew and Gentile? And, in whatever sense we consider the call, either to awaken in the first act of regeneration, or to rouse from a sleepy, drowsy frame, in the after stages of life; the call is most blessed. For CHRIST, in both instances, and in every other, is the sole life, and light of his people. Let us consider it under both.

If we consider the words, as addressed to the unawakened, before the act of regeneration hath taken place; they are the sweet voice of God the Spirit, in calling the sinner, dead in trespasses and sins. For I hope the Reader need not be told, that the child of God, though given by the Father to the Son before all worlds, and by virtue of that gift preserved in JESUS CHRIST, before he is called; yet, until God the Spirit, by his sovereign power, hath called from darkness to light; he is as much in the *Adam*-nature, dead in trespasses and sins, as all the fallen race. He is unconscious of his high interest, neither in a capability of enjoying it. Reader! pause over the subject. And if the LORD in mercy hath wrought this saving change in your heart, will you not feel the blessedness of what *Paul* said to the Church of the *Corinthians*, when reminding them of their former state of unrenewed nature. *And such (said he) were some of you! But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in*

the name of the LORD JESUS, and by the Spirit of our God! 1 Corinthians 6:11.

There is not, perhaps, a subject upon earth equally affecting, as when a child of God, escaped the shipwreck of a fallen nature, got on shore, through sovereign grace; looks back, and beholds the dreadful gulph he had been taken from. He sees the multitudes stranded, and sinking, never more to rise. He beholds thousands, not more undeserving than himself; lost for ever. He stands amazed at are wonders of distinguishing mercy. He feels constrained to lift an eye to the God of his salvation, and with the astonishment of the Apostle, he exclaims: LORD! *how is it that thou hast manifested thyself to me, and not to the world!* John 14:22.

If we consider the words of the Holy Ghost as addressed to those of the regenerate, which in time past were called out of darkness, but are now fallen into a sleepy frame; the promise is equally the same, for it is CHRIST only that can give light. We have a striking example of the kind, in the instance of the Church, as recorded Song Of Solomon 5:2. The LORD JESUS had just before been regaling his Church at his banquet, and feasting her with his love. But, from the body of sin she carried about with her, she soon after fell into such a cold, and lifeless state, to the love-calls of JESUS, that though she knew his voice, yet she pleaded the most frivolous excuses to keep away. Reader! it is our mercy, that as in the first instance of awakening grace, so in all the after manifestations of it, the revival begins with the LORD. *We love him, because he first loved us.* And it is our mercy also, to learn our nothingness out of CHRIST. One of old, well taught of God, thus expressed himself in the view: *hold thou me up, and I shall be safe!* Psalm 119:117. If for a moment only, the LORD withdraws the arm of our support, our faith finds no holdfast. It is, I confess, distressing, yea, very

distressing, thus to learn, what poor creatures we are. Nevertheless, if nothing short of such humblings, will serve to convince our proud hearts, that it is in CHRIST alone our strength and righteousness are to be found; spiritual poverty, and leanness, are blessed things, which ultimately tend to endear CHRIST.

I must not dismiss the view of this sweet scripture, before that I have added one word more, for the comfort of the LORD'S people, under such dead and lifeless frames, which bring on leanness in the soul. Painful, and shameful, as they are, yet let every child God, who hath known, and experienced, the regeneration of the soul, learn to make a right estimate between the sleepy dying frames of a believer, and the dead state of the unregenerate sinner, *dead in trespasses and sins!* There is an immense difference; and the issue must be different. The *one* is the frailty of the saint; the *other*, the hopeless state of the sinner. And let the child of God, while mourning over his calamity, recollect, that in that mourning the soul is pining after CHRIST, though not enjoying CHRIST. CHRIST is still known, still desired. And sure I am, that where these sweet graces are in the soul, there JESUS dwells, however unconscious for the time the soul is of his presence. Holy mourners after CHRIST are promised to be comforted. Matthew 5:4. And it is blessed, when in a sorrowful frame, JESUS is looked for; though more desirable when we hold him fast, in the *Bethel* visits of his manifestations, or galleries of his grace. Song Of Solomon 7:5.

Ephesians 5:15-21

(15) See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, (16) Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. (17) Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*. (18) And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; (19) Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; (20) Giving thanks always

for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; (21) ¶ Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

I think it important to remark, on what the Apostle saith, concerning *Psalms*, and *Hymns*, and *Spiritual Songs*, that he evidently means, all such, as are in the word of God. It is not to be supposed, that the Holy Ghost prohibits the use of all others. But it is to be supposed, that the LORD the Spirit draws a strong line of distinction, between the *Psalms* and *Hymns*, and *Spiritual Songs* of the inspired writings of Holy Scripture; and the uninspired songs, or hymns, of the most godly men whatever. We may speak to *ourselves*, and to one another in words, which tend to godly edification. But, when we speak to the LORD, we cannot be too careful to use the LORD'S own words. Hosea 14:2. By the *Psalms*, are meant those, which go under the general name of *David's Psalms*, though some of them were written by other persons. By *Hymns*, are meant, such as are also scriptural. JESUS sung an hymn, it is said, before he went to the garden. And we have many *spiritual songs* in the word of God. The Song of *Moses*, *Deborah*, *Hannah*, &c. are of this kind.

Ephesians 5:22-33

(22) Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. (23) For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. (24) Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in every thing. (25) Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; (26) That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, (27) That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. (28) So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. (29) For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: (30) For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. (31) For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. (32) This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. (33) Nevertheless let every one of you

in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence *her* husband.

I comprise all that is here said into one view, for it leads but to one and the same subject: and the sweetest of all subjects it forms; namely, CHRIST'S marriage with his Church. We cannot be sufficiently thankful to God the Holy Ghost for it, as it so fully explains the soul-comforting subject, and throws such a beautiful light over many parts of Scripture which refer to the same.

Who should have thought, but from what God the Holy Ghost hath said here, that the institution of the marriage in *Eden*, between our first Parents, was a *shadow* of an union, long before formed in *substance*, between CHRIST and his Church? But *Paul* so saith. *This is a great mystery, (saith he,) but I speak concerning CHRIST, and his Church!* Who would have conceived, that when at the creation of the first woman, the LORD said *it is not good for the man to be alone, I will make him an help meet for him*; Genesis 2:18. and the LORD formed the woman from one of his ribs: that this had a much higher, and a far more early allusion, to the God-man CHRIST JESUS; concerning whom, it was not good, for the promotion of JEHOVAH'S designs in the glory of CHRIST, that he should be alone, but that a Church should be raised up for him, and taken from himself; which might be his Spouse, his Partner, in all communicable grace here, and glory hereafter? Who would have seen CHRIST in that Scripture, when *Adam*, beholding his wife, called her *bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh*; Genesis 2:23. had not God the Holy Ghost unfolded its spiritual meaning, when here he tells us, that *we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones?* Precious JESUS! it was thou, and not *Adam*, for he had no father of the earth to leave, which didst leave thy heavenly

Father, to cleave to thy wife, the Church; and thy Church is now one flesh with thee, in thy human nature, for ever. Genesis 2:24.

Paul might well call this a mystery, yea, a *great* mystery, for all the shadows of it sink to nothing, in comparison of the substance. And, indeed, all the affections, and relations of life, between man and man, are less than nothing, when we look to our relationship in CHRIST. I would beg the Reader's indulgence yet a little further, to consider one or two points more, of this great mystery, and seek the teaching of the LORD, that we may have a right understanding on a subject so truly beautiful and interesting.

And here let us take up the matter from the beginning. It appears then, from several parts of the Holy Scripture, that the marriage of CHRIST and his Church, took place from everlasting. For there can be no period, either in time, or in eternity, to which a date can be fixed, so as to say, that *then* it began. When CHRIST was set up, as the Head, and Husband of his Church, the Church must have been set up with him. For there could not have been an head, without a body: neither an husband without a wife. For, on the supposition that CHRIST, as CHRIST, that is, God and man in one Person, might have been before all others; yet not in his *relative* characters. He could not have been the everlasting Father, before he had children neither the Head, without a body: neither the Husband, without a wife. So that CHRIST and his Church, as Husband, and wife, are from everlasting together. And to this agrees all the Scriptures. JESUS, under the character of wisdom saith, that *he was set up from everlasting*. And that then *his delights were with the sons of men*. Proverbs 8:23, 31. He saith also himself, as the Husband of his people: *I will betroth thee unto me for ever*. Hosea 2:19. And, the Prophet agrees to the same, when he saith to the Church: *For thy Maker is thine husband, the LORD of Hosts is his name: and thy*

Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall he be called. Isaiah 54:5.

Secondly. It appears equally, plain from the Scriptures of truth, that God, when he chose the Church in CHRIST, before the foundation of the world, chose her to be holy and without blame before him in love. Ephesians 1:4. Hence it must follow, that when the Church was presented to CHRIST, she was as the *King's daughter all glorious within.* PSALM 45:13. And, though she hath since fallen into poverty and wretchedness by sin; yet, when CHRIST married her, she was *holy, and without blame before him in love.* And such she is again when washed from her sins, in his blood. And such will she be, as this Chapter states, when JESUS comes to present her to himself, at the last day, *a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but to be holy, and without blemish.* Oh! who shall conceive the glories of that day, when JESUS shall bring home his church; and when all the members, being fully prepared, in body, soul and spirit, for the everlasting enjoyment of her LORD in glory, shall enter with him, into the marriage-supper of the Lamb, and be for ever with the LORD!

REFLECTIONS

AMIDST numberless blessed things, for raising reflection of a sweet, and spiritual nature, contained in this Chapter; I would beg of God the Holy Ghost, for grace, to fix my mind upon God the Father's love, in that, the Church is called by him *dear children!* Oh! for grace to consider the blessedness of such a name, and the proof, that all his redeemed are, indeed, dear children in his Almighty view. For He hath chosen them in his dear Son, given them to his dear Son, and given his dear Son for them, and chosen them to himself, as his adopted children in CHRIST. Oh! who that is

enabled by grace, to enter into an apprehension of the unspeakable, mercy contained in such a relationship, but must cry out, with the Apostle: *Behold! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called sons of God!*

In like manner would I beg of God the Holy Ghost, to fix my mind upon God the Son's love, who hath so loved his Church, as to give himself, an offering, and a sacrifice, to God, for a sweet smelling savor. Oh! thou dear *Emanuel!* let the rich savor of thy blood, which hath perfumed heaven for ever, sweetly cleanse my soul, from the savor of all uncleanness!

And no less would I beg of God the Holy Ghost, to fix my mind upon his own glorious Person, and Godhead; and that, in the fruit of the Spirit, *in* all goodness, and righteousness, and truth, I may be a follower of God, as one of his dear children, and walk in love, AS CHRIST also hath loved me, and given himself for me! Oh! for grace, to be walking in the light, as children of the light, and as the members of CHRIST'S body, his flesh, and his bones. Shortly, JESUS will bring home his Church; and all the great purposes of his mystery, will be accomplished. His people shall then see *him as he is, and know even as they are known!*

CHAPTER 6

CONTENTS

In this Chapter the Epistle is closed: and a blessed Close is made: Paul bids the Church to entrench themselves, in the holy Armory of God. And he seals up all, with an Apostolic Benediction.

EPHESIANS 6:1-9

(1) ¶ Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. (2) Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) (3) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. (4) And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (5) Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; (6) Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; (7) With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: (8) Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free. (9) And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

The Apostle, according to his usual method in the close of his Epistles, makes a distinct, and separate address, to the several members of the Church, on relative duties; and as an affectionate Apostle, and Father, speaks personally to every class. I need not offer a single observation on either, by way of comment: the whole is abundantly plain. What he saith to children, in relation to the first commandment with promise, it is scarcely necessary to say, is in allusion to the first of the second table of the law; and therefore as such, it stands, as is here said, with a promise, and which is the first. As if the LORD would begin, with the earliest dawns of life, to intimate the graciousness of his promises, running from first to last, through all the departments of the time-state of the Church.

Ephesians 6:10-20

(10) ¶ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. (11) Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (12) For 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*. (13) Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (14) Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; (15) And your feet shod with the

preparation of the gospel of peace; (16) Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. (17) And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: (18) Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; (19) ¶ And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, (20) For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Under the figure of an holy warfare the Apostle views the Church of CHRIST, and recommends to the people a suited Armory in CHRIST, for the combat. The Reader will recollect, that the Apostle never loseth sight, that he is writing to the Church of regenerated persons: and with this conviction upon his mind, he thus shows, how the holy warrior should be clad. I beg the Reader, from these verses to observe, how blessedly he recommends the saint of God, to begin with the LORD, that he may end in the LORD. *Finally*, (saith he,) *my brethren, be strong in the LORD, and in the power of his might*. He that begins in the LORD'S strength, will be sure to find strength all the way in his warfare. And, there never was an instance of a child of God being finally defeated, that did so. The armies in heaven *overcame by the blood of the Lamb*. Revelation 12:11 And the Church upon earth is said to be *more than Conquerors, through Him that loveth them*. Romans 8:37.

As the Apostle recommends the LORD'S people, to go forth in the LORD'S strength so he bids them follow up all, in prayer, when clothed, in the divine armory. *Praying always*, he saith, *with all prayer, and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance*. Pause, Reader! and behold in imagination, the holy warrior in the LORD'S cause, when girded with the divine weapons, here enumerated, always on his knees before the LORD; and con ceive, what a lovely sight! And then ask, what fiery darts of

Satan, what conflicts of flesh and blood, what persecution from the world, shall bring him down, whom God lifts up? What weapon, formed against God's redeemed ones, shall resist the sword of the Spirit, and the word of God? Prayer, is a blessed weapon. For it calls in God to our aid. All the holy heroes of the Church gone before, have found it a sure defence. *Jacob* wrestled in prayer, and prevailed. And one of the Prophets, a thousand years after, recorded the blessed account of it. Compare Genesis 32:24. with Hosea 12:3, 4, 5. *David* also tells us, in his experience, that this was his chief weapon. *In the day (said he) when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.* Psalm 138:3. Nay, what was CHRIST'S strength, in his human nature, but the same? Sweetly we read, for our comfort, and encouragement, that *in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers, and supplications, with strong cryings, and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard, in that he feared. Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience, by the things which he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the Author of eternal salvation, unto all them that obey him.* Hebrews 5:7, 8, 9. Reader! do not overlook these things. Prayer sweetly crowns the whole preparation, in the day of battle, when we go forth in the LORD'S strength, in the LORD'S cause. Prayer calls JESUS to our help, and JESUS becomes our strength.

I do not think it necessary, to notice the whole, and every weapon, which the Apostle here enumerates, as to be taken from the LORD'S armory. All are blessed, and all essentially necessary. But they are too plain to need any Comment. I would just glance at one of them, because *Paul* commands, that above all, this should be taken; namely, *faith.* *Above all (saith he) taking the shield of faith, where with ye shall, be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*

And it is very plain, that *Satan* flees from nothing so hastily, as when he is opposed by strong, and lively actings of faith, in the blood of the Lamb. When a poor buffeted child of God, against all *Satan's* accusations, and all the alarms of conscience, which the enemy takes care to bring before him, pleads guilty to all, but takes confidence, at the same time, in the Person, blood; and righteousness of JESUS CHRIST; the devil can fight no longer. And this is what the Apostle meant, when he said: *Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.* James 4:7, 8. But how shall a self- condemned sinner resist the devil but in CHRIST'S strength; or draw nigh to God, but in CHRIST'S Person, blood, and righteousness? CHRIST is the alone way, and truth, and life; for none can come to the Father, but by him. John 14:6.

Reader! do not dismiss the subject hastily. If the LORD the Spirit hath regenerated you, you can be no stranger to this holy warfare. You see then, where your strength lies. Not in tears, not in a brokenness of heart, not in repentance; yea, not in anything of your own, but in CHRIST. Oh! for grace, with one of old to say, *I will go forth in the strength of the LORD God, and make mention of his righteousness, even of his only.* PSALM 71:16.

Ephesians 6:21-22

(21) But that ye also may know my affairs, *and* how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: (22) Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and *that* he might comfort your hearts.

Reader! do observe the humbleness of this great Apostle, in seeking the remembrance of the people's prayers. Yes! *Paul*, though so eminently blessed of his Almighty Master, and engaged as he was, in his LORD'S service, and keeping up, us as no doubt

he did, constant communion at the throne; yet earnestly begged of every child of God, to be mentioned by them, whenever they went to the heavenly Court. Think then, if *Paul* was so earnest, that new supplies of strength, and grace, should be fetched for him, by the prayers of the people; how needful it must be now, in these awful times, in which we live, that the faithful, should bear the LORD'S poor, and weak servants, on their hearts before the throne, daily, and hourly, for strength and grace from the LORD, to qualify them for the arduous work, in the ministry. *Brethren, pray for us!*

Ephesians 6:23-24

(23) Peace *be* to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (24) Grace *be* with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen. Written from Rome unto the Ephesians by Tychicus.

How sweetly *Paul* begins, and ends his Epistles. So, methinks, should every child of God, when writing to a brother in CHRIST! It is blessed, it is gracious, when, from CHRIST'S love in the heart, we send forth love to all CHRIST'S little ones. It is a prayer founded in the love of God. And, what begins in prayer, awakened by divine grace, will be sure to be followed, in divine mercy.

REFLECTIONS

HERE let us pause over the close of this Epistle, and, as we look back, and review the wonderful contents of it, may both the Writer and Reader of this *Poor Man's Commentary*, bow down before the throne of a Covenant, God in CHRIST, for so rich a portion of divine revelation of JEHOVAH'S love to the Church! Oh! God the Spirit grant to us, if it be thy blessed will, *a spirit of wisdom and revelation*, in the apprehension of those divine truths, and that they may be *the grafted word* for the salvation of the soul.

Blessed LORD JESUS! we praise thy holy name, for thine unceasing mercies over thy Church, that amidst all the ravages of time, and all the revolutions of men and things; thy Church remaineth, and ever must remain, as long as the moon endureth, from one generation to another. And, although *Ephesus* is no more; the Church which was in *Ephesus*, and all the faithful in CHRIST JESUS, are the same, founded in Thee, the glorious Head of thy body; the *same yesterday, and today, and forever.*

Faithful *Paul!* our love to thee is great, in that the LORD counted thee faithful, putting thee into the ministry. Thou wert indeed, as thou hast here said, an Ambassador, though in bonds. Blessed for the Church was it, that the LORD sent thee as his Ambassador. And what art thou now, since like an Ambassador returned to his Master's royal Court, thou hast given in thy report to the King, and hast entered into the joy of thy LORD! Almighty Head of thy Church and people! bless all thy redeemed here below, who like *Paul*, love thy appearing in the regenerating of sinners, and comforting of saints, and who are looking forward for thy appearing, when thou shalt come to be glorified in thy saints, and admired in all them that believe! In that great day of God! thou wilt give to every one of thine, the crown of righteousness, which fadeth not away. Then will the whole Church shout for joy, and everlasting praises will be heard, from all the ransomed of Zion, to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, through endless ages. Amen.