



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

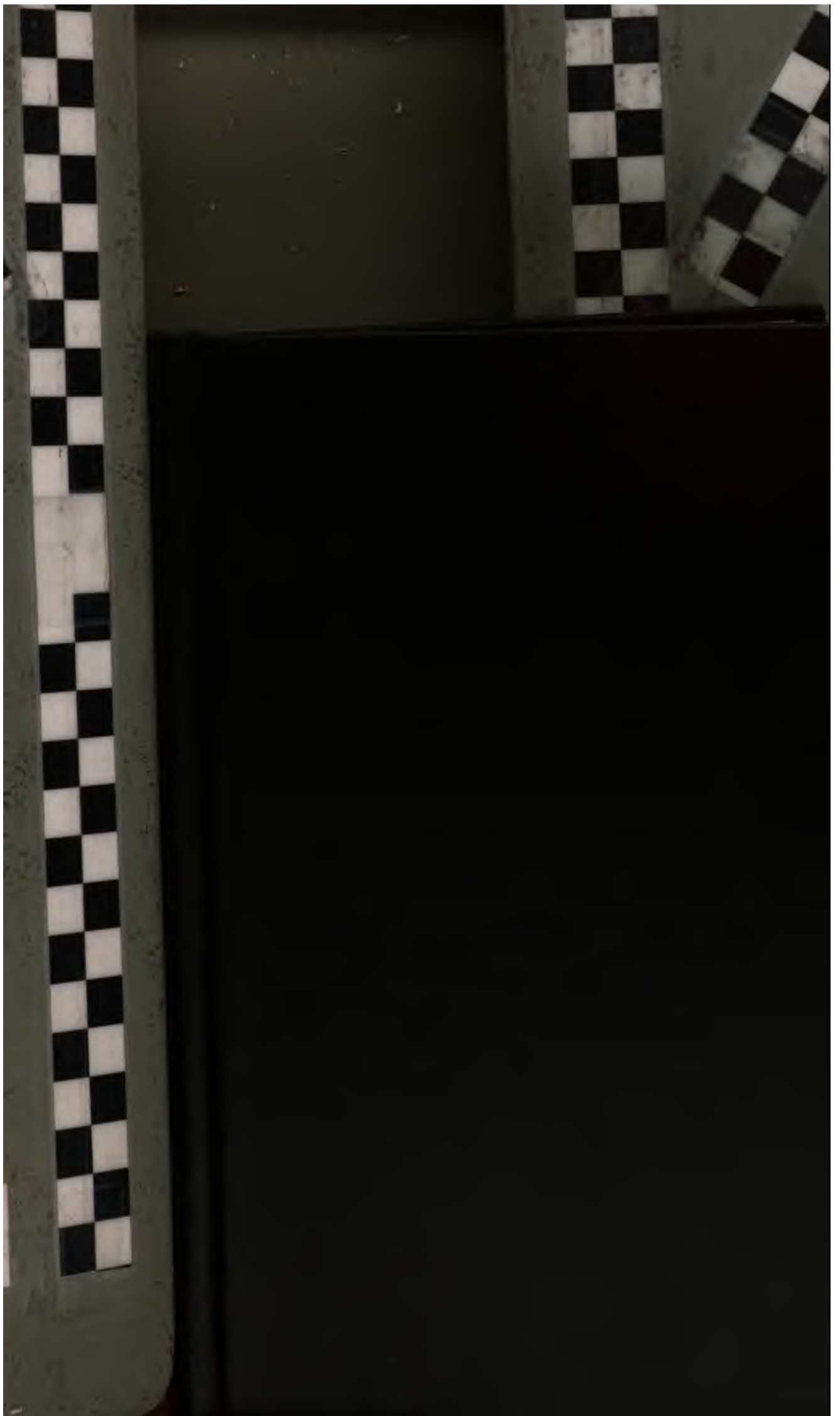
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

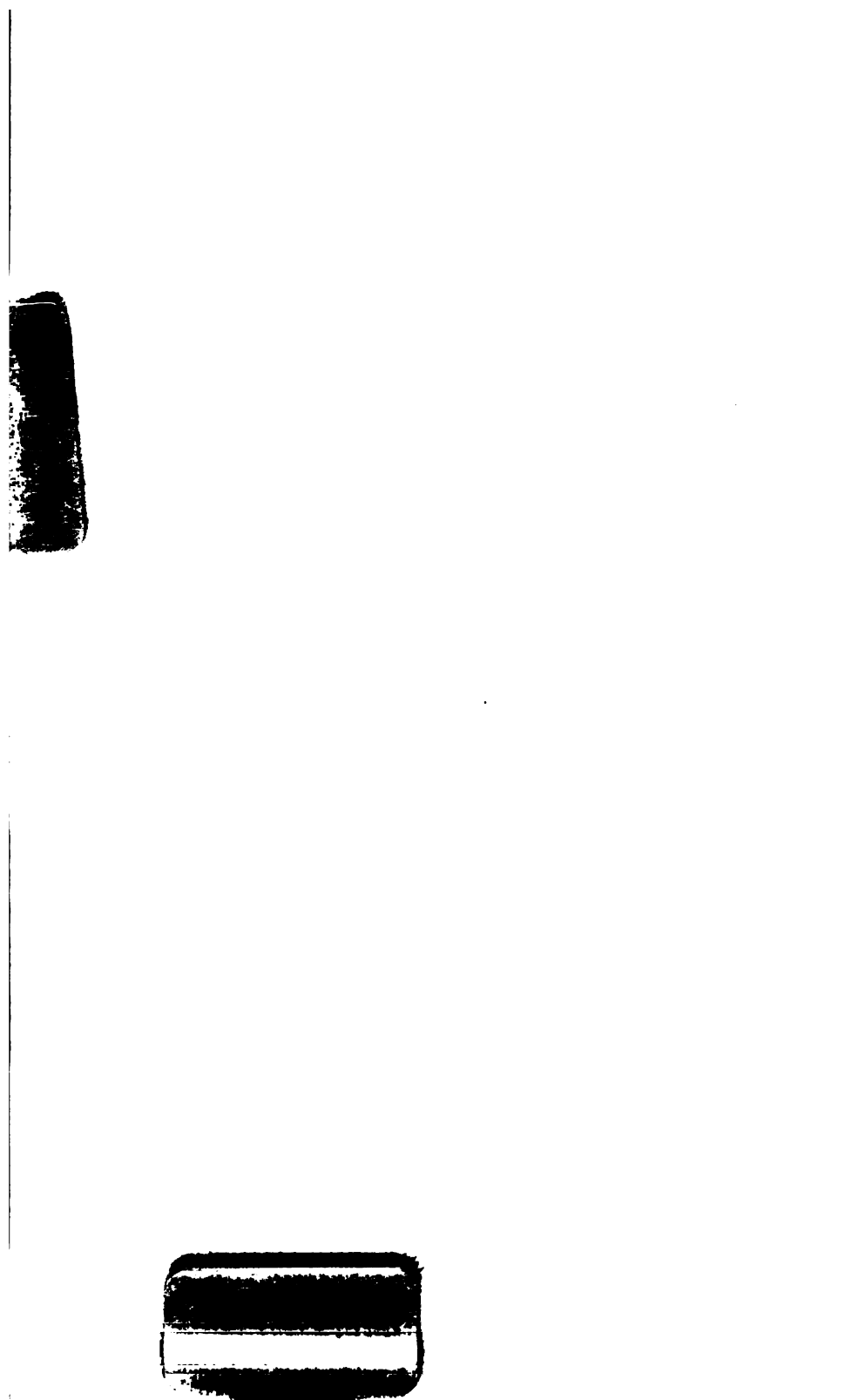
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





—

!

:

.

:

!

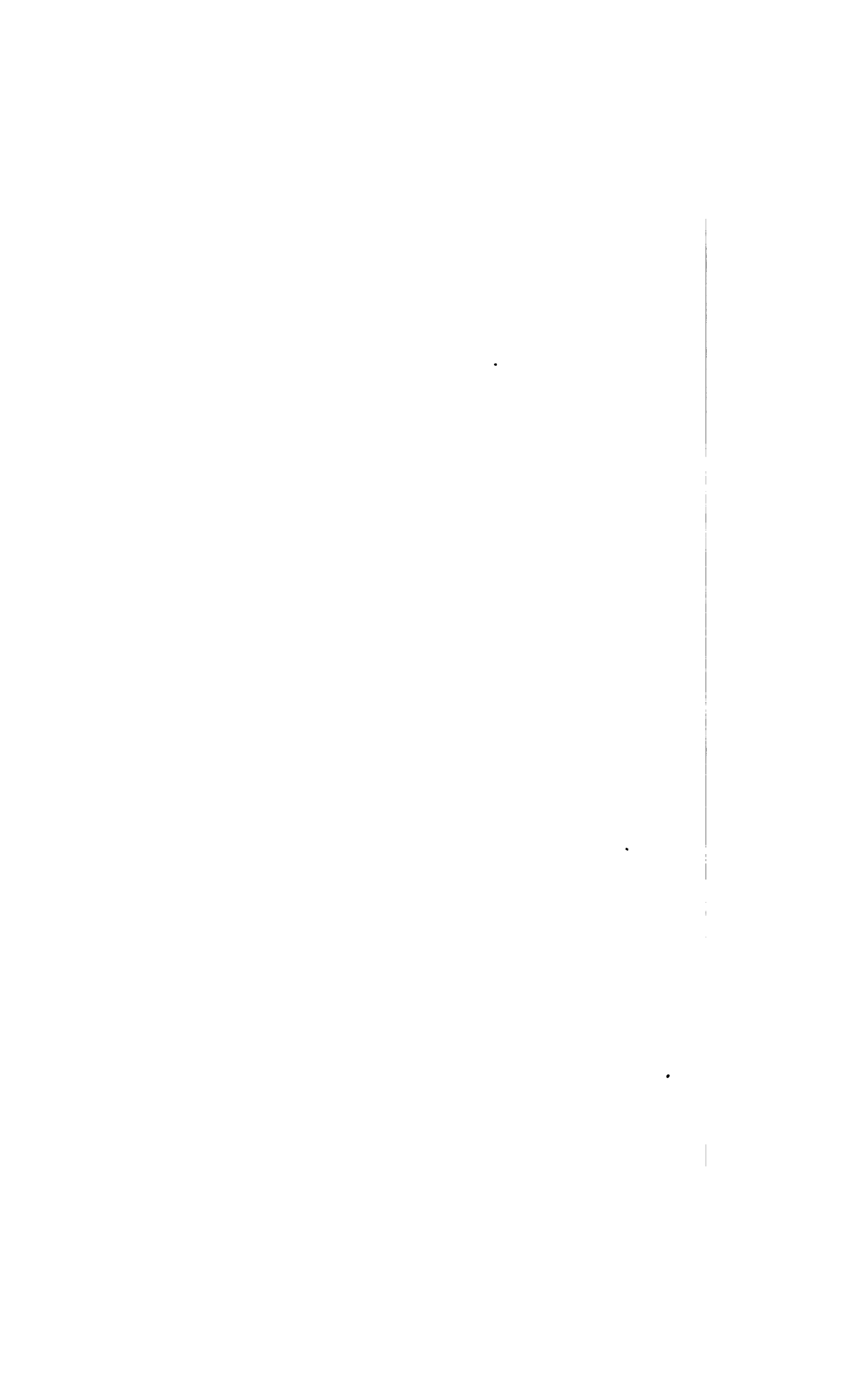
:

:

:

!

:



A
PRACTICAL EXPOSITION
OF
THE GENERAL EPISTLES
OF
JAMES, PETER, JOHN, AND JUDE,
IN THE FORM OF
LECTURES,
INTENDED TO ASSIST THE PRACTICE OF DOMESTIC
INSTRUCTION AND DEVOTION.

By JOHN BIRD SUMNER, D.D.
LORD BISHOP OF CHESTER.

LONDON:
J. HATCHARD AND SON, 187, PICCADILLY.
1840.

ALL RIGHTS
CANCELLED.
LIBRARY.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY EBOTSON AND PALMER,
SAVOY STREET.

BS 2777
58

C O N T E N T S.

J A M E S.

LECTURE I.—i. 1—4. Temptations : their object and effect as the test of faith	Page 1
LECTURE II.—i. 5—8. Support under temptations provided for the faithful	. 11
LECTURE III.—i. 9—12. The spiritual benefits of trial 19
LECTURE IV.—i. 13—15. A corrupt heart, not outward temptation, the cause of sin	30
LECTURE V.—i. 16—21. God the author of all spiritual good 40
LECTURE VI.—i. 22—25. The difference between hearers and doers of the word	. 48
LECTURE VII.—i. 26, 27. The effect of true religion upon the habits of life	. 56

b 2

LECTURE VIII.—ii. 1—7.	
The equality of rich and poor in the sight of God . . .	60
LECTURE IX.—ii. 8—18.	
The obligation of the whole law of God	65
LECTURE X.—ii. 14—17.	
The effect of christian faith upon the life	71
LECTURE XI.—ii. 18, 19.	
Works of righteousness required as a test of justifying faith	76
LECTURE XII.—ii. 20—26.	
Genuine faith proved, as in Abraham, by obedience . . .	81
LECTURE XIII.—iii. 1—12.	
Importance of the tongue. Its wrong use reproved . . .	87
LECTURE XIV.—iii. 13—18.	
Christian meekness and gentleness described and enforced	92
LECTURE XV.—iv. 1—6.	
Covetousness, worldliness, and pride condemned	96
LECTURE XVI. iv. 7—10.	
Sinners invited and exhorted to repentance	100
LECTURE XVII.—iv. 11—17.	
Uncharitable censures and presumptuous confidence con- demned	105
LECTURE XVIII.—v. 1—8.	
The unrighteous warned of the judgments of God	109
LECTURE XIX.—v. 9—11.	
Christians exhorted to mutual love and patience	114

CONTENTS.

v

LECTURE XX.—v. 12—15.
Sundry rules of practice recommended 118

LECTURE XXI.—v. 16—20.
Blessings accompanying spiritual advice and mutual
prayer 123

1 P E T E R.

LECTURE XXII.—i. 1, 2.
St. Peter addresses his epistle to the Christians scattered
throughout different countries of Asia 128

LECTURE XXIII.—i. 3—5.
The Christian kept by the power of God 134

LECTURE XXIV.—i. 6—9.
The Christian's feeling of love and joy towards Christ
Jesus 138

LECTURE XXV.—i. 10—12.
The accomplishment of prophecy 146

LECTURE XXVI.—i. 13—21.
The Christian's need of holiness 151

LECTURE XXVII.—i. 22—25.
The Christian's need of brotherly love 156

LECTURE XXVIII.—ii. 1—6.
Christ the corner-stone of a temple raised to God 160

LECTURE XXIX.—ii. 7—10.
The high calling of Christians 165

LECTURE XXX.—ii. 11—17.	
Christians exhorted to a holy, peaceable, humble conversation	170
LECTURE XXXI.—ii. 18—25.	
Christians exhorted to patience and forbearance	175
LECTURE XXXII.—iii. 1—7.	
The duties of wives and husbands	180
LECTURE XXXIII. iii. 8—16.	
Christians exhorted to patience under injuries, and meekness under provocation	185
LECTURE XXXIV.—iii. 17—25.	
Salvation through Christ Jesus compared to the deliverance of Noah	191
LECTURE XXXV.—iv. 1—6.	
The obligations of Christians to a life of righteousness	196
LECTURE XXXVI.—iv. 7—11.	
Christians exhorted to watchfulness, prayer, and brotherly affection	203
LECTURE XXXVII. iv. 12—16.	
Encouragements to submit to suffering in the christian cause	208
LECTURE XXXVIII.—iv. 17—19.	
Encouragement to perseverance in well-doing, from the contemplation of future judgment	213
LECTURE XXXIX.—v. 1—7.	
The elders and members of the church exhorted to diligence and humility	219
LECTURE XL.—v. 8—14.	
Exhortation to watchfulness and humility	223

2 P E T E R.

LECTURE XLI.—i. 1—4.	
The promise of God for the renewal of man's nature	228
LECTURE XLII.—i. 5—9.	
The qualities expected in a Christian	233
LECTURE XLIII.—i. 10—12.	
The necessity of holiness to secure salvation	239
LECTURE XLIV.—i. 13—18.	
The certainty of those things which Christians believe	244
LECTURE XLV.—i. 19—21.	
The nature and effect of prophecy	248
LECTURE XLVI.—ii. 1—9.	
The certainty of divine judgments: and the preservation of the righteous	254
LECTURE XLVII.—ii. 10—16.	
Disorderly and corrupt disturbers of the church condemned	260
LECTURE XLVIII.—ii. 17—22.	
The dreadful condition of those who fall away through false teachers	265
LECTURE XLIX.—iii. 1—8.	
Scoffers and unbelievers refuted	270
LECTURE L.—iii. 9—12.	
The proper effect of faith upon the life and habits	275
LECTURE LI.—iii. 13.	
Heaven the abode of righteousness	282

LECTURE LII.—iii. 14.	
Preparation for the coming of the Lord	287
LECTURE LIII.—iii. 15—18.	
The Christian's growth in grace and knowledge	293

1 JOHN.

LECTURE LIV.—i. 1—7.	
The privilege of the Christian, and the character required of him	302
LECTURE LV.—i. 8—10.	
Of sin, and the forgiveness of sin	307
LECTURE LVI.—ii. 1, 2.	
Of Jesus Christ, as our Advocate and Propitiation	312
LECTURE LVII.—ii. 3—6.	
The knowledge of God is the keeping his commandments	317
LECTURE LVIII.—ii. 7—11.	
Brotherly love required in Christians	322
LECTURE LIX.—ii. 12—15.	
Christians cautioned against the love of this world	327
LECTURE LX.—ii. 16, 17.	
The danger of worldly things	332
LECTURE LXI.—ii. 18—25.	
A warning against falling from truth	337
LECTURE LXII.—ii. 26—29.	
The Christian's ground of confidence	342

CONTENTS.

ix

LECTURE LXIII.—iii. 1—3.	
The high calling of Christians, and their corresponding obligations	347
LECTURE LXIV.—iii. 4—6.	
Deliverance from sin the purpose of Christ's coming	352
LECTURE LXV. iii. 7—12.	
The children of God known by their righteousness	356
LECTURE LXVI.—iii. 13—17.	
Brotherly kindness the characteristic of Christians	362
LECTURE LXVII.—iii. 18—24.	
Grounds of the Christian's confidence	367
LECTURE LXVIII.—iv. 1—6.	
False teachers to be discerned and avoided.	373
LECTURE LXIX.—iv. 7—12.	
The love of God towards man an example for man to follow	379
LECTURE LXX.—iv. 13—16.	
Brotherly love the effect of the Spirit of God upon the heart	384
LECTURE LXXI.—iv. 17, 18.	
The effect of perfect love in producing perfect confidence	389
LECTURE LXXII.—iv. 19—21.	
Love towards God is shown by love towards man	394
LECTURE LXXIII.—v. 1.	
The nature of faith in Christ	398
LECTURE LXXIV.—v. 2—4.	
The effect of faith in Christ, in overcoming the love of this world	414

LECTURE LXXV.—v. 6.	
The method by which faith in Christ overcometh the world	422
LECTURE LXXVI.—v. 6—10.	
The testimony to the truth of the Gospel	433
LECTURE LXXVII.—v. 11, 12.	
Eternal life given in Jesus Christ	438
LECTURE LXXVIII.—v. 13—17.	
On the promises granted to prayer	446
LECTURE LXXIX.—v. 18—21.	
On the watchfulness required of the Christian	451

2 JOHN.

LECTURE LXXX. 1—8.	
An exhortation to stedfastness of faith and practice	457
LECTURE LXXXI. 9—13.	
A warning agaist encouraging teachers of false doctrine	461

3 JOHN.

LECTURE LXXXII. 1—8.	
Gaius is commended for his christian life and practice	466
LECTURE LXXXIII. 9—14.	
Diotrephes, a disturber of the church, is censured	471

CONTENTS.

xi

J U D E.

LECTURE LXXXIV. 1—4.

Warning against false teachers who perverted the Gospel 476

LECTURE LXXXV. 5—10.

Warning against corrupt teachers 481

LECTURE LXXXVI. 11—16.

The false brethren described and condemned 486

LECTURE LXXXVII. 17—23.

Exhortations and counsels concerning corrupt members
of the church 491

LECTURE LXXXVIII. 24, 25.

Praise and glory ascribed to God 497

EXPOSITORY LECTURES.

THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES.

LECTURE I.

TEMPTATIONS THE TEST OF FAITH.

JAMES i. 1—4.

1. *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.*

Among the apostles, two bore the name of James. One, the brother of John, was early put to death by Herod.¹ The writer of this epistle was the son of Alphaeus, and the brother of Jude. We learn from the Acts of the Apostles, that he resided chiefly at Jerusalem, and took the lead there in directing the affairs of the church.² He was most concerned, therefore, with the Hebrew converts: and to them he addressed his letter: *to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad*, i. e., to the believing Jews dispersed throughout the world. It relates, especi-

¹ Acts xii. 1.

² So as to be styled, in the chronicles of the church, the first bishop of Jerusalem.

ally, to the circumstances in which they were placed, and the errors which prevailed amongst them, and is calculated alike for consolation and for correction.

May those who now read it, so receive the correction as to be entitled to the consolation!

2. *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.*

At first, this seems strange; because we daily pray that we may not be "led into temptation."

The same word, however, is used to signify both *temptation* and *trial*. Against trials, in the form of sin, against *sinful temptations*, we must watch and we must pray. But we need not feel the same anxiety concerning trial, in the sense of affliction, or reproach, or worldly difficulties, in the course of duty. If *divers temptations* of this kind befall us, they are of God, sent for a purpose, and leading to an end which our heavenly Father sees to be desirable.

Such is the apostle's meaning, when he says, *Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations*. Be not cast down by the present affliction and distress, to which as Christians ye are exposed. Let it never shake your faith: nay, rather learn to "glory in tribulations;" count them matter of rejoicing when you look to the end; and let comfort be mixed with your tears, like the sun shining through a summer cloud.

But this is not natural. It is one of the many cases in which the Christian must strive against nature, and rise above it. And if so, he must have a reason. If he is thus to overcome his natural

feeling, he must have another feeling to set against it. If he is to mount upward, when he would naturally sink, he must have somewhat to buoy and support him. Something must enable him to strive against the stream.

What is here needed St. James supplies.

3. *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.*

Count it joy, when you find yourselves in the midst of trials. They put your faith to the test. And when faith bears this test, and does not fail in the trial, then it appears to be true and genuine; to be divinely planted, and firmly rooted;—for it has borne fruit, has produced *patience*: produced in your soul the needful gift, the christian quality of *patience*, of resolution, of constancy. For this reason count it joy. God is not visiting you with his anger, but proving you in his love. He is accomplishing a gracious purpose in you, as it is written, (John xv. 2,) “Every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” So does the heavenly husbandman treat the trees of his vineyard, the trees of his planting. He employs the means which shall add fresh graces to their character, and bring forth in them the precious fruit of *patience*.

Let us then consider the way in which this purpose is fulfilled, and *the trial of faith worketh patience*.

When we desire to know the quality of anything, we bring it to a test. We doubt the quality of a metal. We prove it; we submit it to a trial. When particular strength is needed, we use especial means

by which that strength may be ascertained, may be manifested to exist. And so the quality of faith is shown, when that undergoes a test; when it is proved not to be an empty notion or a vain profession, but a pure consistent principle, actuating the Christian in the various circumstances of his life, regulating and governing his character, and still continuing to support him, even though he may *fall into divers temptations*. Thus the *trial of faith worketh patience*, produces and displays it; as hardships borne, prove endurance; opposition resisted, proves perseverance; losses and afflictions undergone, prove constancy: none of which might have existed, certainly none would have been known to exist, if there had been no afflictions, no hardships, no opposition. It is to be *counted joy*, that faith has risen superior to such trials: has come out like gold from the refiner's fire. Faith itself is of all things most precious. And, therefore, that is precious too, which has shown faith to be sincere.

We may take example from the *temptations* of which St. James was thinking when he wrote these words: the temptations which beset the early Christian; trials of reproach, and hatred, and poverty, and imprisonment, and every kind of persecution. Perhaps he was remembering his own experience: for he was one of those, whom (as we are told, Acts v. 12—42,) the rulers summoned, and imprisoned, and commanded “that they should not speak in the name of Jesus. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.”

Now there could be but one sentiment in the mind of these apostles, inducing them to *count* their ill treatment and persecution *joy*: enabling them to rejoice in pain and shame. They had before learnt, that we know not how much or how little we can do, till the trial proves our weakness or our power. And now they had felt and shown the reality of their faith. A few weeks before, their faith had borne no such test. Their Lord had been in danger. One of their number had basely denied him; all had forsaken him, and fled. Now they were themselves in danger; yet none denied his Lord, none forsook his service: in the face of those who had power and authority, they had declared their resolution to obey God rather than men: and *the trial of their faith working patience*, had given them an inward satisfaction which amply recompensed their temporary sorrow, and enabled them to *count it joy, that they had fallen into this temptation*.

And now, if we follow this out, we shall see that it applies to other times and seasons than those in which the apostle lived. No person can work out his salvation as a disciple of Christ, without falling into divers temptations. If he is poor, poverty has its temptations; if he is in easy circumstances, prosperity has its temptations. Every season of life has its temptations: every vocation has its temptations; and when these are seen and known, and resisted and overcome, then there is cause of joy: "*The trial of faith has wrought patience:*" and the experience of that patience leads to all that blessed hope which the apostle indulged; that "our short affliction, which is but for a mo-

ment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

Take, for example, the course of this world. The course of this world is a temptation: it abounds with opportunities of doing what is displeasing to God, but is pleasing to men. Friends flatter, inclination persuades, custom leads: then is the trial of faith. “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” But which will ye serve? Will you follow common practice; i. e. will you follow the world, against God’s will? or will you obey what you believe to be the will of God, and leave the world to think of you as it may, and treat you as it chooses? No one can go through life without encountering such temptation, in some shape or other. And when such trial of faith has been successfully undergone; when there has been such contest, and faith has proved victorious, then he may *count it joy*. He carries testimony about him, that he is not one who once “gladly received the word, and in time of temptation falls away:” but one who “retains the word in an honest and true heart, and brings forth fruit with patience.”

Even the assaults of Satan may, in the end, furnish ground for satisfaction. A besetting sin is a trial: courting compliance, urgent for concession. It may be suffered to remain and harass. God, we know, permitted the enemies of the Israelites to remain, for the express reason that he might prove them, “whether they would keep the way of the Lord.”³ And for a like reason he permits his people to remain with hearts

³ Judges xi. 22.

still liable to transgression, and he permits Satan to tempt them to transgress : he allows “ the flesh to lust against the spirit,” that this *trial of faith may work patience* : may prove constancy, and sincerity, and self-denial. There must be proof—such is human fickleness—proof that we are not satisfied with resolving against sin, but are actively opposing it—proof that we can resign something present for the sake of promises to be fulfilled hereafter—proof that, “ if the right hand offend thee, thou canst cut it off, and cast it from thee,” rather than disobey the commands of God. Though therefore for the time the Christian grieves at trials like these—as the Israelites must have grieved when harassed by the Philistines ; though this he will especially lament, that so much corruption should still remain within him ;—yet in the end he will *count it joy* : he has had strength to “ take up the cross and deny himself :” he has been not “ a hearer only, but a doer of the word :” he “ has resisted, striving against sin :” and therefore he trusts that the blessing may be his, which is promised to the man “ who endureth unto the end.”

The inference, then, to be drawn from this passage is full of comfort : of comfort to all, at least, who are content to regard this world in a true scriptural light, not as a world of enjoyment, but a world of laborious preparation. It is a comfort to know, that all things, whether pleasing or displeasing now, shall work together for good to them that love God. Afflictions, reproach, disappointments, losses, whatever the craft and subtlety

of the devil or man worketh against us, do not “spring out of the dust,” but are part of a fore-known and predetermined plan, leading the Christian to final glory.

4. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

This must be well remembered. Not temptation, but resistance of temptation: not affliction, but the patient endurance of affliction: not loss or sacrifice, but cheerful submission to the loss or sacrifice,—proves the faith to be perfect and entire. Just as it is not the entering into the crucible, but the coming out of the crucible as gold tried in the fire; not the application of the touchstone, but the result of the test, which proves the metal to be pure and unalloyed. Job has been handed down to us as an example of patience, not because his children were taken from him, and his substance plundered, and his body wasted by disease: but because, when all these things were against him, he had yet strength to say, “Shall we receive good from the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?”⁴—because patience had its perfect work, and he endured to the uttermost, exclaiming, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”⁵

So when God saw fit to try the faith of his servant Abraham, and to say unto him, “Take thy son, thy only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him”⁶ as a sacrifice on the altar—the trial itself could not be *counted joy*. The command

⁴ ch. xi. 10.

⁵ ch. xiii. 15.

⁶ Gen. xxii. 2.

which was laid upon him, to slay his eldest son, could be spoken of in no other way than as an afflictive dispensation. It was when his faith had proved stronger than his natural feelings; when his love to God had enabled him to overcome his paternal affection—it was then that he was happy to have endured. He was found *perfect and entire, wanting nothing*. Nothing could separate him from the love of God. So St. Paul bids the Hebrew Christians to have confidence; not because, after they had received the truth, they had been forced to enter upon “a great fight of affliction;” but because, though assailed, they had come off victorious. Their patience had endured. It is not the contest which gratifies, but the triumph: not the afflictive process, but the glorious result. Had Job, like the Redeemer, known the calamities which awaited him, Job also might have prayed, that so bitter a cup might pass from him. St. Peter spoke as one who knew the feelings which belong to man, when he addressed his people as those who might now “be in heaviness through manifold temptations.” And so Paul: “No chastening is for the present joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby.”⁷

But the delightful result of the whole is to see the wisdom and the mercy of God thus employed in the preparation of his people for the glory to which he has called them. Trials, we find, have a purpose; and that purpose is, that the people of God may be *perfect and entire, wanting nothing*.

⁷ Heb. xii. 11.

Had Job fallen into no such temptation as that which his extraordinary misfortunes brought upon him, he might have practised integrity, and charity, and piety; but in sight of that "cloud of witnesses," which behold the people of God struggling against an evil nature and a tempting world, in their sight it would not have been shown that his faith could bear reverses; that he could feel towards God, when chastening him with adversity, as he had felt towards him when loading him with worldly blessings. And so in every case. Trials are sent to the people of God as the discipline, the preparation which the soul requires. Opportunity is thus given, that they may "add to their faith, virtue, and temperance, and patience," and resignation: that after having "suffered for a while, the God of all grace may stablish, strengthen, settle them."

Shall we not, in conclusion, pray, Lord, increase our faith! To whatever trials the course of thy providence may lead us, enable us to "glory in infirmities," to "endure hardships," to "fight a good fight, to keep the faith," to "look not on the things that are seen, which are temporal, but at the things which are not seen, and are eternal!" Because, "Blessed is the man who endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

LECTURE II.

SUPPORT PROVIDED FOR THE FAITHFUL.

JAMES i. 5—8.

5. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not: and it shall be given him.

The apostle had before exhorted his christian brethren not to be disheartened, though they might *fall into divers temptations*: but rather to *count it joy*, because these were intended to fulfil the purpose of God concerning them, and were a needful part of the course through which they must go.

Still provision must be made, lest the tribulation, instead of *working patience*, should prove occasion of falling.

Now therefore he proceeds to show, that provision is made for this. God may see it good for his people that they shall undergo heavy trials. Still “God is faithful, and will with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” *If any of you lack wisdom*; be deficient in the grace which his circumstances especially require: *let him ask of God*, who has said, “Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find.” And God is not as men, who may give to some, and deny to others. God *giveth to all* who come to him by the appointed way, the “one Mediator between

God and man." And God is not as men, who are forced to limit their bounties. God giveth to all men *liberally*; supplies from a source which is inexhaustible, the fortitude, the wisdom, the comfort, the resignation, the particular grace which their case makes needful. And, again, God is not as men, who may sometimes upbraid those whom they relieve: God "knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are but dust: and when he giveth, he *upbraideth not*, but is pleased when his people follow him, nay, importune him, with their petitions: when they always "pray, and faint not."¹

Such an assurance is needed by those who are "working out their salvation" in the world: and how great the mercy, that such an assurance has been given!

To this promise, however, a condition is annexed.

6. *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed.*

7. *For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*

8. *A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.*

Wavering is doubting.² When we ask a benefit

¹ Luke xviii. 1.

² The word *wavering*, in English, as also the word *διψυχος*, *double-minded*, might admit of another interpretation, as if relating to one who had not made up his mind to "follow the Lord fully." But the original verb *διακρινομαι*, as used Matt. xxi. 21, and Mark xi. 23, and Acts x. 20—Go with them, nothing doubting—together with the clause, *let him ask in faith*:—fix the sense to a steadfast confidence in God.

of a fellow-creature, we may ask with a doubt upon our minds—though even this we should not disclose—whether he have the power, or whether he have the will, to grant what we are seeking at his hands. But when we ask of God, and ask for spiritual wisdom, there must be no such *wavering*: his power we know; to doubt that, would be to disparage his attributes: and his will we know; for he has declared it; to doubt that, would be to discredit his word. And therefore our Lord himself, in making the same promise, has added the same condition. (Matt. xxi. 22.) “All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” Again, Mark xi. 23, “Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith.” Again, Matt. ix. 23, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.”

Are we surprised that so much stress is laid on *confidence*? Because it is thus seen, where the heart is really resting; whether on itself and its own resources, on any earthly means; or whether it can really cast its care upon God with an equal sense of helplessness and of hope, saying, “Lord, undertake for me.”³ It was the absence of this faith in the Israelites which Isaiah severely rebukes. (xxx. 15.) “Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not. But ye said, No, for we will flee

³ Isa. xxxiv. 14.

upon horses ; therefore shall ye flee : and we will ride upon the swift : therefore shall they that pursue you be swift."

Thus were the Israelites *double-minded, unstable* : taking in their mouths the name of the Lord, but really in their hearts trusting to mortal strength and human means. Exactly as a *wave of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed* ; one while rising towards God, and then sinking down to the feebleness of human power. This doubting, double, wavering mind receives no blessing. *Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.*

Still there must here be some reserve. It is possible that a meek and contrite heart may *waver*, conscious of its own unworthiness. With what confidence, it might say, can I approach the great and holy God? How can I expect the strength or wisdom that is from above, the gift of the Spirit, to which I have so often "done despite?"

Now this is not the sentiment of a double mind, but of a humble mind. This is not the mind which shall receive no favourable return. Such a mind must not be depressed, but encouraged. Here is "the bruised reed." It is not the will of God that the heart which is bruised should be broken. Here is "the smoking flax." The mercy of God would not quench it, but kindle an abiding flame. There is no limitation to the promise, "Ye shall seek me, and ye shall find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."⁴

Doubt not, therefore, but earnestly believe, that

⁴ Jer. xxiv. 13.

if any man *lack wisdom*, he may *ask of God*, and find *that he giveth to all men liberally*. He deals with us as a father with his children. He secures our application to him, by letting us feel our daily need. Perhaps here is the secret cause of many of the trials, both inward and outward, which befall the Christian. They drive us to prayer. Thus God keeps us dependent on himself, and promotes that free and gracious intercourse which belongs to those whom he has adopted in Christ Jesus: who, as his children, have liberty to come boldly to the throne of grace; to “cry, Abba, Father.” For if earthly parents, with all the evil that is in their hearts, still seldom fail in giving good gifts to their children; “shall not your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” *Only let them ask in faith, nothing wavering.*

Many things, no doubt, we might ask, and not obtain. God will grant the petitions of his servants as may be most expedient for them. The unlimited promise is given, not to every prayer, but to the prayer for spiritual aid; for *wisdom*, true and heavenly wisdom—wisdom we shall not seek in vain, if we *ask in faith, nothing wavering*: nothing wavering in our desire for it, nothing wavering in our conviction that it must come, and can come, from God alone. Seasons there will be when the Christian’s path may seem to himself so dark and perplexing, so beset with difficulties, that nothing is before him but despair. And yet, in that darkest hour and day of gloom, there is light prepared and safety provided; the way we know not, for “we walk by faith, and not by sight;” but it is sure, for

“ he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” The history of Elisha illustrates this, as related 2 Kings vi. 15. The king of Syria had resolved to seize the prophet, and encompassed the city in which he was lodging “ with a host of men, horses, and chariots.” The servant of the man of God rising early perceived this, and said, “ Alas, master ! how shall we do ? And he answered, Fear not : they that be with us are more than they which be with them. And Elisha prayed and said, Lord, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw ; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” There was a power encompassing him, invisible to mortal eye, but seen by the prophet’s faith, which restrained the enemies of Elisha.

And thus it is that God’s children are preserved and strengthened, and guided in a way that they know not. The timid Christian faints at the thought of the difficulties which he must encounter, the enemy without and the enemy within, one assaulting and the other betraying, as he works out his salvation against the power of Satan in an evil world. We may use the words of Elisha, and say, “ Open his eyes, Lord, that he may see.” Could his eyes be thus opened, he would behold the preparation made for his security : no assault of Satan, for which a way of escape was not provided ; no inward weakness which there was not grace to strengthen ; no outward obstacle which there was not power to overcome. In fact, we have abundant proof of this, in what God has

already done, and is daily effecting for those who take him at his word, and do *ask wisdom of him, nothing wavering*. Do we not find the truth confirmed: *He giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not?* In all the temptations which poverty or wealth, which contempt or honour, which the feebleness of age or the frailty of youth, present, do we not find wisdom given, by which the children of God are carried safely through all their trials? We see those who have this world's good, not trusting in uncertain riches, but "rich towards God," "rich in good works." We see others, whose lot is poverty, like Paul of old, able, "in whatsoever state they are, therewith to be content." We see one who is honoured of his fellow-men, "lowly in his own eyes," and "setting others before himself." We see the simple become wise; the meek become bold in the cause of God. We see the beauty and energy of youth preferring "the reproach of Christ to the pleasures of sin for a season," and devoting the first-fruits of life to the service of God. We see the feeble and delicate braving pain with cheerfulness, and the heart that bleeds with sorrow smiling through tears. In short, we see *wisdom* supplied, the very wisdom which the case requires, to those that are indeed the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. So that, to encourage us, we have both promise and performance. We have the promise of Him, whose character it is that he is "faithful," not one who turns or varies. And we have the performance too. God does bestow wisdom on his people, that others, led by their example, and convinced by

their good conversation which they behold, may in their turn be brought to the same heavenly Father, to ask the same wisdom, and experience the same almighty power.

Therefore, *if any of you lack wisdom*, or be in difficulty and “heaviness through manifold temptations,” take your example from that history which has been recorded in scripture for our instruction in righteousness. We are there informed how Hezekiah received from the king of Assyria the message which threatened destruction to his kingdom. “And Hezekiah went up into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord. And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said, O Lord God of Israel, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand.”⁸

Do thus in the case of any prevalent temptation, any present perplexity, any seeming danger, any besetting sin. Spread it before the Lord *in faith, nothing wavering*. And be assured that the answer will be to you, as it was to Hezekiah, “That which thou hast prayed unto me, I have heard.”

⁸ 2 Kings xix. 19—20.

LECTURE III.

THE SPIRITUAL BENEFITS OF TRIAL.

JAMES i. 9—12.

9. *Let the brother of low degree rejoice, in that he is exalted.*

10. *But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.*

11. *For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.*

The apostle returns to the trials of which he had before been speaking: the trials which the Christians to whom he wrote were often called to suffer, because they were Christians. They were liable to be imprisoned: to be ill treated in various ways: to be deserted by their friends: to lose their means of livelihood: to be deprived of their estates and goods. This might happen to either class: to *the rich*, or to *the brother of low degree*. And he offers reasons to both why they might submit to such afflictions with cheerfulness, and count it all joy, find reason to *rejoice*, when they fell into such temptations.

It might happen to the poor. It had happened in a special manner to those whom St. James was now addressing, the twelve tribes that were scat-

tered abroad. It happened to them when they first embraced the faith; (Acts viii. 1.) “ And there was a great persecution against the church that was at Jerusalem :” when Saul, at that time a persecutor, entered into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison.” He himself, no longer a persecutor, but a comforter of those persecuted, reminds them (Heb. x. 34) of “ the former days, when they had endured a great fight of afflictions, and took joyfully the spoiling of their goods.”

Now, when a temptation of this sort befalls a man, a trial which springs out of his faith, and which, by renouncing his faith, he might escape, he needs a ground of support and consolation. St. James supplies this. *Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted*, when called to suffer for the faith which he professes. It is an honour, an elevation, an accession of dignity to him.

The believer in Christ, of whatever rank, is always *exalted*. He is enrolled among “ the sons of God :” made an heir of the heavenly kingdom. In this he is exalted : as is written in the book of Revelations : “ I know thy poverty ; but thou art rich.” The poorest man who believes in Christ Jesus, is richer than the wealthiest without him. But here the *brother of low degree is exalted*, not merely as believing, but as suffering because he believes. And there was a reason why he might consider himself as exalted when he was thus tried. He was exalted, in being added to the number of those who in former ages had been brought under suffering in the cause of religion ; who had

“ had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings ; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment ; being destitute, afflicted, tormented ; of whom the world was not worthy.”² He was exalted, in being called to bear honourable witness to his Lord and Master in the midst of a perverse generation. He was exalted, because, though blotted out of the book of man’s good opinion, he had praise of God, and his name was written in heaven. And therefore St. Peter writes to his disciples in the very same strain as his brother apostle James. (1 Pet. iv. 12.) “ Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as if some strange thing had happened unto you : but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings ; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”

Such, then, was to be the reflection of *the brother of low degree*. I am cast out, impoverished, left destitute. It gives me a dignity to which I could in no other way attain. I am thus made a fellow-sufferer with saints who have trodden the same steps before, and are now with God : nay, it makes me a fellow-sufferer with Him who suffered for me : and “ if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with him.”

Well might the poor man *rejoice in that he was exalted*.

But what should be the comfort of the rich ? They might seem to deserve more pity, who had lost more, because they had more to lose. Many

² Heb. xi. 36.

a rich man, in those early days, was forced to part from all his worldly possessions. Some did this voluntarily. Joses is particularly mentioned, afterwards called Barnabas; (Acts iv. 36;) "who having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet." Others had no choice left them; they were plundered; or they were deprived of the situations which gave them wealth; or their relations laid an indictment against them as being Christians; and for this crime their goods were forfeited.

These, then, as well as the humbler sufferers, would want a consolation. Perhaps they would want it more; for poverty is better prepared for hardships than prosperity. The apostle finds a consolation for them. He reminds them of the danger of the rich: how riches bring a snare with them; and how one who trusts in them, trusts in what is as fading, and weak, and transitory, as the flower of the field. *Let the rich rejoice in that he is made low; because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth; so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.*

As much as to say: Ye were *rich*, you are *made low*. There may be reasons why you should *rejoice* in this as the truest blessing. Think of the effect of riches on the heart of man: think of the multitudes who have fallen from their steadfastness, or disgraced their faith, through the temptations which this world's good has placed them in. Glittering

for a while, like a gaudy flower, and proud to glitter in the sunshine; looked up to and admired, and finding their pleasure in this envy and admiration, till in the evening, or before the evening came, they were cut down, dried up, and withered. *So shall the rich man, the man who trusts in riches, fade away in his ways.* And what was their security, that *they* might not have come to trust in riches, and so to fade away, if riches had been continued to them?

We are thus reminded, and we cannot be reminded too often or too strongly, of the danger of prosperity; the silent effect of a smooth and easy course of life upon the heart, which is so apt to corrupt it, to weaken it, to wrap it up in indolence or self-indulgence. We read in ancient history of an army which withstood the hardships of a wintry campaign in a mountainous district, survived all that frost and snow could bring against it, and proved victorious against brave and powerful enemies. The commander entered in triumph a rich and luxurious city, and there his soldiers found rest and ease. And repose and luxury did that which oppositions and hardships could not do. Indulgence conquered the troops which had resisted every danger. Weakened in mind, and enervated in body, they fell before the enemies whom till then they had overcome.

And this is a just example of the heart of man. "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," is dangerous to it. Insensibly these things gain a hold even over those who have chosen God for their portion. We see it in the case

of Hezekiah, one of the best of the kings of Judah : God had brought him to wealth ; and he became proud of his wealth ; and if it did not alienate him from God altogether, at least it gave him a divided heart. The king of Babylon sent messengers unto him. (2 Kings xx. 13.) “ And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and showed them all the house of his precious things, the silver and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures : there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not.” And in the faithful history we read the cause of this his error. (2 Chron. xxxii. 25.) “ His heart was lifted up. God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.”

The case of David furnishes a still more sad example. The blessings which were heaped upon David, instead of satisfying him, made him insatiable, till he was no longer the servant of God, but became the slave of his own passions and desires.

Now, if such were the case with men like David and Hezekiah,—how must it be with others who have never tasted, as they had tasted, of heavenly things,—or how must it be with those who have been wavering between God and mammon, and never made a decided choice that the Lord should be their God ? How much is it to be feared, lest, satisfied with all they have, they should never look beyond—should swim along the stream which seems to run so swiftly and so smoothly, and not perceive that the end is death : not perceive the abyss to which that easy current leads, till at last

they are plunged in the gulf to which it carries them ?

If, then, there is this danger, it is the greatest mercy on the part of God to interpose and avert it : to awaken them out of their lethargy. He did so in the case of Hezekiah. He showed him that as the grass *withereth, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth, so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.* Isaiah said to Hezekiah, (Isa. xxxix. 5.) “ Hear the word of the Lord of hosts. Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord.” Thus was *he made low.* And it was well for him that he was made low. After the message of Isaiah, “ He humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of God came not on them in the days of Hezekiah.” 2 Chron. xxxii. 26.

As to David, God took from him the prosperity which he had abused : and because in the enjoyment of ease and comfort he had forgotten God, he was trusted with ease and comfort no longer; the remainder of his life was a continued course of trial.

Such, then, was the course of thought in the apostle’s mind, when he writes—‘ *let the rich rejoice in that he is made low.*’ If God sees fit that he should fall into trial, let him count it all joy. It is the thing which God sees that he requires; the medicine which his soul needs, for its eternal

health: and if the process seems painful, there is safety in the end. He was rich. And there was reason to fear that he might be "rich to himself," not rich in good works, not "rich towards God."

Our Lord has pointed out the danger, when he sets before us a man whose goods had increased far beyond his wants and expectations, and who said within himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Here was the *flower, and the grace of the fashion thereof*, shining in all its brightness. But soon *the sun rises upon it with a burning heat*. The word is spoken from on high: "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee."³ *So shall the rich man fade away in his ways*. Such was the end in this case. But suppose, instead of taking his soul that night, instead of cutting him down as one that cumbered the ground, God had seen fit to grant him a further trial: had let him alone another year; and meanwhile had pruned off the superfluous luxuriance of his wealth, and ploughed up the ground of his heart with divers trials: trials of disgrace, of affliction; of reverse of fortune. It often happens, thus, that the plant of grace is revived and strengthened, which before had brought no fruit to perfection, being choked "by the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things." Many have said like David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted. Before I was afflicted, I went wrong: but now have I kept thy word." And what just cause would there be why such an one should

³ Luke xii. 18.

rejoice, and be thankful, that *he had been made low*? How light, throughout eternity, would seem his short afflictions!

Now, who can say, that many of the trials which befall the people of God are not designed and fore-ordained to preserve them from dangers such as David and Hezekiah yielded to?—dangers, which have proved fatal to many who had once seemed to be enlightened with heavenly things; have brought them to the state of that rich man who thought only of his ease and enjoyment; so that they have forgotten the Lord their Maker. God, who knows what is in man, has mercifully removed the snare into which they might otherwise have been betrayed. And though trials do not come upon the Christian now, in the way in which they threatened the scattered people to whom St. James was writing, yet the course of God's merciful providence remains the same. Certainly, the Christian's fortune is not now in danger, because he "will live godly in Christ Jesus." His character may meet with no reproach: he is not "everywhere spoken against;" if he is despised by some, the esteem of others will make this up to him. But he may meet with trials of another kind, and he will need consolation under them, and the apostle's argument may give that consolation. The people of God must "rejoice in tribulation," as far as their nature is made capable of such rejoicing, looking to the end—looking to that for which God is providing,—the salvation of their souls. They might have been proud of the gifts or the blessings assigned them. Hezekiah's example proves the danger. In Heze-

kiah's case, God left him to meet the temptation. We are expressly told, "God left him in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart." But in another case, instead of leaving the temptation, God may take it out of the way. Instead of leaving the idol on which the heart might have been too much set, God removes it altogether: cuts down the flower which might have nourished pride, and on which the eyes might have too fondly rested. So, again, they might have been self-indulgent. Prosperity, like that of David, might have led them, as it led David, to pursue the things of the flesh, rather than to restrain and mortify them. God prevented this, when he laid them on a bed of sickness or of pain, or deprived them of the means of vanity. They might have loved the creature more than the Creator. God foresaw this, and has taken away the desire of their eyes. So doing, he has kept them to himself. The superscription, if we could read it, written on the dispensation, is, "Give ME thy heart."

Without doubt, these things are painful to flesh and blood. "No chastening is for the present joyous, but grievous,—though afterward it worketh the peaceful fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby."* St. James's language will seem strange to those who think that the kingdom of God will drop, as it were, into our hands, without any seeking, striving, or preparing on our parts,—who suppose that we can sleep in the lap of ease and self-indulgence, and wake to find ourselves in heaven.

* Heb. xii. 11.

But it was not thus with the early Christians: they treated the present life as that which was insignificant and unimportant, and the world to come as everything. We are too apt to treat the present life as the thing really worth caring for, and the kingdom of heaven as something added to it at its close.

If we give place to thoughts like these, we can never understand why St. James should invite the poor man to rejoice because he is reduced to difficulties, or the rich, because he is laid low. But the same language will not surprise those who are judging of these things as Scripture teaches them to judge, and are lighting the lamp by which their steps are guided, at the light of God's word. These will see, how much it costs to renew the soul; to create it again after the image of God. These will know how much it needs of purifying, that the dross may be cleared away. These know how apt it is to stray from God, and be satisfied with things present, and seek its enjoyment in this world; how many warnings it requires, that here is not our rest. These will perceive the apostle's purport, when he says, "*Let the rich man rejoice in that he is made low.*" These will understand him, when he says, and so concludes his argument,

12. *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*

Let this be the only crown we seek. It is the

⁵ δοκιμος γενομενος, being approved, as metal which has stood the test. Contrary, αδοκιμος, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. 1 Cor. ix. 27, &c.

only crown which shall not be taken from us—the only crown that fadeth not away.

LECTURE IV.

A CORRUPT HEART THE CAUSE OF SIN.

JAMES i. 13—15.

13. Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God : for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.

St. James had written much in the preceding verses on the subject of temptation ; had given reasons why the Christians might enjoy comfort, and more than comfort, under them. They exhibit the christian character, and improve it : they bring forth the good fruits of patience, and humility, and constancy. Such is their effect when they serve the purpose for which they are sent ; when he that is tried endureth temptation, and stands “ complete in all the will of God.”

But now it is necessary to provide against an error into which the wayward heart might fall. Suppose that a man, instead of resisting and enduring, yields to the temptation ; is he at liberty to excuse this, on the ground that the temptation is God’s sending ? Is his sin to be thus palliated, because, if he has given way to circumstances, he has only given way to circumstances which God ordered ?

By no means. In such case it is proved that his heart was not right with God ; and the temptation which might have advanced his spiritual character has shown its weakness. The same food which strengthens and benefits the man in health, may be the cause of fatal injury to a disordered constitution. But this shows that the constitution is disordered. So the temptations which increase the strength of the true servant of God, and prove his faithfulness, may lead the nominal Christian to sin and death. While, on the other hand, the touchstone which betrays the reprobate silver, shows the value of that which bears the test ; the crucible which consumes the dross, leaves the pure gold more fine.

But because men do thus deceive and excuse themselves, St. James warns them of their error. "*Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God ; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.*"

And are there any who do thus argue, and, pretending that they are so tempted, lay their transgressions to God's account ?

There may not be many who put such a sentence into plain and open words ; but they have it in their hearts, and use it to satisfy conscience when it troubles them. There was something like it in the first temptation. "The Lord called unto Adam, (Gen. iii. 11—12,) and said, Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded that thou shouldst not eat of it ? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Here the trans-

gression is ascribed to the woman whom God had given to be a help-meet for Adam. And doubtless she was the instrument by which he was placed in that temptation. But though the temptation came through the hands of Eve, the transgression came from the heart of Adam. He saw something in the fruit which he preferred to the commands of God, and therefore disobeyed them.

How many, who are not aware of it, are following the example of Adam! They represent the circumstances in which they are, as the reason why they do things which ought not to be done, and leave undone much which they ought to do. The wife, the husband, the children, are pleaded: or perhaps the occupations on which their livelihood depends. It is the very plea of Adam. The condition of life which God has given:—families, neighbours, companions;—these too are God's giving,—and their advice, their example, misled and betrayed them.

Now it is perfectly true, that all these things are often hindrances in the way of a holy and religious life. The cares of a family are a hindrance. Friends, who are not like-minded, are a hindrance. Companions, who threaten mockery, business which engrosses thought and time; common practices which offer gain;—all these oppose an obstacle to religious zeal and practical piety.

And it is likewise true, that many of these things may be ordered, as it were, of God; for though no one ought of his own accord to choose companions or form alliances which may injure his spiritual

welfare, yet a man has not always the choice in his own power; and though a situation inconsistent with the service of God is not a situation to remain in, the faithful disciple of Christ may often be placed in great straits between the adverse claims of God and mammon.

Yet, brethren, *let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.* There are difficulties, no doubt, which will prove him, and try what is in his heart. But he is not obliged to sink under these difficulties: he is bound to encounter and oppose them. It is his trial. He is here, to “work out his salvation;” he is here, to show his faithfulness, his sincerity; and this is manifested under difficulties, and disclosed by opposition. It is a fatal, though common mistake, to suppose that his way on earth is to be made so plain and easy to the Christian, that we may slide along a smooth and uninterrupted course to heaven. Nay, there is a “broad road,” but it leadeth to destruction. There is a peaceful way, which nothing disturbs; but “the end of that way is death.” “The friendship of the world is enmity with God.”

We do not, then, deny, that in one sense temptations are of God. He governs the world, and so governs it, that his people are brought into temptation. It was in the course of his providence that Naaman came to seek a cure from Elisha; and the same circumstances brought temptation to Gehazi. *Yet let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.* The will to yield under temptation comes “from within,” out of the heart of man. As St. James proceeds to say, “*Every man is tempted,*

when he is drawn away by his own heart's lust, and enticed."

This will appear on examination. Companions, some may say, mislead. Why? Because a man prefers their good will to the favour of God. Unless he "follow them to do evil," they will separate from him, despise him, deride him. There is a trial in this, though far less than is commonly supposed: But if a man's heart were sound, the favour of friends would be nothing to him, compared with the love and regard of his heavenly Father. It is *his own heart's lust*, his desire of "the praise of man," which leads him to "consent when sinners entice him."

Again: the cares of a family take up the attention, and engage those hours which ought to be employed in the worship of God. This is often urged; and Satan suggests it as a sufficient reason for neglecting the interests of the soul. And so the Lord Jesus, in his wonderful parable of the sower, has instanced the "cares of this world, and the lusts of other things," as among the hindrances to faithfulness and fruitfulness. But he has also shown, that when it is so, the ground is not properly prepared. It has not been cleared of thorns and briars. The seed, which is so choked and wasted, has not fallen on good ground. Follow up the case, and you will find that what are termed the cares of a family, mean the love of ease, or the love of appearance, or the indulgence of some worldly gratification which is stronger than the love of God. When that mirror is held up, which at the great day will display to every one the secrets of their

own souls, it will be seen that not indispensable duty, but *their own heart's lust*,⁶ was the true reason why cares and troubles "about many things" were permitted to exclude the "one thing needful."

So in regard to the urgent demands of worldly business. Certainly this may so occupy the time and thoughts, that the soul shall be left to be overrun with weeds. But what, again, is this, except the *lust of the heart*? Men *will* be richer, *will* be higher than they are: a rival must not advance before them; and therefore they grudge the hours which ought to be given to sacred duties; they grudge the day which God has hallowed for himself: no opening must be missed, no opportunity passed by, which may promote the great object of their lives. And is it not seen here, which world is uppermost in their hearts? Is it not made plain that they are not "seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness?"

This was the train of thought in St. James's mind when he wrote the sentence we are now considering. One of his converts might have been threatened with imprisonment, another with the spoiling of his goods, another with the desertion of his friends. The apostle had been showing how such temptations ought to be met, and in what way they might be improved to spiritual benefit. But suppose that, instead of thus rising against the trial, the disciple should say, *I am tempted of God*. The circumstances into which he has brought me, the straits to which I am reduced, are such that I

⁶ ἐπιθυμία, strong desire; whatever the desire of the heart may be.

have nothing left me but to deny the faith, and abandon a religion which I can no longer maintain. Against thoughts like these the apostle warns the brethren: *Every man is tempted, when he is led away by his own heart's lust, and enticed.* If his love of his possessions, of his family, of his credit among his friends, were not stronger than his love of God; if his value for present ease and worldly comforts were not greater than his value for the heavenly promises; if the kingdom of God were really *his heart's desire*; he would not hesitate to "deny himself and take up the cross, and follow" the Redeemer, through loss or gain, through ease or danger, through evil report or good report, through the friendship or enmity of the surrounding world. An undue preference of things worldly above things heavenly; a regard of man's opinion; an anxiety after advancement in wealth or honour—pride, covetousness, indolence—these are the real *evil*: these, and not the circumstances in which a man is placed, are the true causes why the soul is neglected, and God disobeyed. *God cannot be tempted with evil: neither tempteth he any man.* The occasion, the circumstances, only supply the means by which the worldly feelings, the inward covetousness, the prevailing indolence, the secret pride, are shown: they do but bring to light the hidden evil: and, notwithstanding these circumstances, there would be no transgression, if the sinful disposition were not lurking in the heart. When the spark issues from the flint, the steel elicits it: but the steel only elicits what was in the flint before. So when Peter did what all the early disciples were tempted to do,

and denied his Lord, whom it would be dangerous to confess :—the place in which he was, the company by which he was surrounded in the hall of the high priest's palace, furnished the temptation : but if in his heart he had not cherished the fear of man, none of those things would have moved him then, any more than they did move him some few weeks after, when in the face of greater dangers he refused to obey man rather than God.

And as this is true of those sins of which St. James had been speaking ; sins to which his countrymen the Jewish Christians were particularly exposed : concealment of the truth : worldly compromise : departure from the faith : so is it also true of every sin by which men are ruined. This seems to occur to the apostle as he is writing : and leads him to allude, in passing, to the origin and end of all sin.

15. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin : and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

The inordinate desire of the heart produces transgression of God's law. When covetousness has possession of the heart, it brings forth dishonesty, as in Gehazi : falsehood, as in Ananias : treachery, as in Judas : transgression of the divine command, as in Achan. When pride prevails, it brings forth malice, as in Saul : envy, as in Haman : hatred, as in Joseph's brethren : murder, as in Cain. When the lust of the heart inclines to this world's gratifications, it brings forth selfish luxury, as in him who neglected Lazarus : contempt of heavenly promises, as in the young ruler : forgetfulness of God, as in him

whose only thought was how he might “take his ease, eat, drink, and be merry.”

And the end of these things is death. The apostle cannot lose the opportunity, having thus declared the *origin* of sin, of showing also its *end*. *Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* We must not for a moment separate these two things. We must not think of one, without also turning our minds to the other. On account of sin, “the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.”

And truly, this is needful. What God has joined together, sin and death, let no man put asunder. Such are the temptations to sin, to which a corrupt heart gives force: so many are they, who, though called to holiness, live in some of those ways which are contrary to holiness,—that we cannot be too often or too seriously reminded of the gulf to which those ways lead. *Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* Sin hath brought forth death from the beginning. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” Sin brought forth death, even to the Son of God. He “died unto sin.” And “if God spared not his own Son;” if the holiness and righteousness of his government demanded, and received, that vast, stupendous sacrifice;—will it spare those who, in the face of that atonement, that warning, that example, obey their *own heart's lust*, and yield when it entices them? That which ought to be the proof of their faithfulness, they make an occasion of falling. And then they too fondly persuade themselves that God beholds not, regards not, this perverseness: that there is something in their own case, something in their

situation, or perhaps in their temper and nature, which is to dispense with self-denial, and make disobedience venial.

But let no man be deceived by any such groundless expectations and false hopes. If you fall into divers temptations, they are ordered for your probation, not for your destruction; not to pervert, but to “stablish, strengthen, settle you.”

If, indeed, you are content to venture through the world with no determined plan or object, then you will be “like a wave of the sea,” driven and tossed by every wind of temptation. The desire of your own heart, whatever it be, will carry you here and there, *till sin bringeth forth death*. But if you are disciples of Christ, have renewed for yourselves that covenant to which you were engaged in baptism, and have set your heart on God, and your mind on heaven, then you have a positive assurance that all things shall “work together for good” to you, and not for evil: that “God will with the temptation make also a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” The same storm which brings to the ground the house built without foundation, proves the strength of that which is founded on a rock. And thus it is with the temptations of the world. Elisha rejects what Gehazi runs after: Joseph triumphs when David is overcome: Luke is faithful to the cause which Demas forsook: Mary sits at the feet of Jesus, whilst Martha is distracted by worldly cares.

In the end it appears, that He who ordereth all things, ordereth all things well: he tempteth no man to evil: but he proves men, and sees what is in their

hearts, that he “ may be justified when he speaks ” his final sentence, “ and clear when he judges: ” when he makes an everlasting “ difference between him that serveth Him, and him that serveth Him not: ” when he shuts out from his presence the unstable and unfaithful, and fulfils his exceeding great and precious promises to the man who endureth temptation. “ Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God. ”⁷

LECTURE V.

GOD THE AUTHOR OF ALL SPIRITUAL GOOD.

JAMES i. 16—21.

16. *Do not err, my beloved brethren.*

17. *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

There seems connexion between this and the preceding verses. St. James had been before declaring, *God cannot be tempted with evil.* How could such a thought be imagined, as that God should tempt any man with evil? *Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good and perfect gift is from above.* God is the author of good, and only of good. He is *the Father of lights*: and “ with him is no darkness at all. ” The mental, inward light, and the material, outward, light: the light that shineth in our hearts, and the light that shineth in the heavens, are

⁷ Rev. iii. 12.

equally from Him. At the creation of the world he said, "Let there be light, and there was light:" there was light in the world. At the creation of man he said, "Let us make man in our own image:" let him have intellect: let him have conscience. So he willed it; and there was light in the mind of man.

And it is not with Him, the Father of lights, as it is with those heavenly bodies which he has made. It is part of the great design, that *they* should change; that there should be *variableness* with them: the moon, which gives light by night, shines not upon the whole world at once: now gives us its benefits, and now denies: and the sun, that rules the day, knoweth its going down. The case is otherwise with the great Contriver: *with him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*: "he is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Still further to contradict the thought that God could tempt any man to evil, St. James is led to reflect on the kindness which he had shown towards themselves, and the intent of that kindness.

18. *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.*

*Of his own will.*¹ It was his own merciful design. We did not move towards him, but he towards us. We did not ask any such mercy: he was found of those that sought him not, who were not seeking him, when he made us, as it were, *the first-fruits of his creatures*. St. James is looking onward with a prophet's eye to that multitude which no man can number, which shall here-

¹ βουληθεις.

after surround the throne of God, and join in the praises of their Redeemer. And of this vast harvest, he and those whom he was addressing were a kind of *first-fruits*,² the first produce offered to God of a new creation in Christ Jesus: the forerunners of that harvest which should be gathered from all the ends of the earth, “even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” God had so ordered it *of his own will* and pleasure: by the voluntary exercise of his own counsel he had determined that these should be the first of that great family of believers in Christ, reared on earth and raised to heaven. *Of his own will begat he us.* Let no one doubt to whom the praise must belong, if we are a part of his new creation. If we are in an especial sense his children, he is our Father: to him we owe our spiritual being. If Christ is made our Redeemer, “the Father draws” us to him. If we hear his invitation, it is because “he opens our hearts” to receive it. He is the author of every good and perfect gift: and surely then he is the author of that best and most perfect gift, which is eternal life. He, *the Father of lights*, “shines into our hearts, that we may see his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.”³

Thus we are referred to the author of our faith. So are we also to the instrument which he uses.

² It was commanded in the law, Levit. xxiii. 10, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest unto the priest; and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you.

³ 1 Cor. iv. 6.

Of his own will begat he us *with the word of truth*. This is the visible parent of the new creation; the instrument which effects the spiritual change. *The word of truth*. To James it had been *the spoken word*. James, like the other apostles, had been following his earthly pursuits, when the Lord had called him from them; had spoken to him "that which he knew, and testified that which he had seen," concerning heaven, and the way to heaven. It was a new life to James; and from thenceforth he walked as one who had been "begotten anew." So it was the word spoken by Peter and John, which caused the assembly of Jews, as related Acts ii., to repent of the wickedness which they had committed in "killing the Prince of life," and to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. In our day, sometimes the word *spoken*, for "faith still cometh by hearing," and sometimes the *written word*, is made the visible instrument through which faith is wrought in the soul. "There are diversities of operations." But never let us forget, "it is the same Spirit;" it is still God *the Father of lights* which makes *the word of truth* effectual: so that whilst in one the spark is feeble, finds nothing to nourish it, is soon extinguished and seen no more; in another it kindles a steady flame, gathers strength as it continues, and burns brighter and brighter unto the end. Without *the Father of lights*, *the word of truth* has no more effect, produces no more fruit, than seed when cast upon a stone.

And yet observe the nature of the instrument which the Father employs in the conversion of his

children. He begat us with *the word of truth*. It is an instrument suited to the nature of man, as endued with reason and conscience. The word of truth is proposed to him, and his heart receives it, or rejects it. The heavenly Father invites him to be of the number of his children; sets before him *the word of truth*. Receive that; live by that: let it be the principle of your thoughts and actions; and “I will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

It is thus that a man is begotten of God: through this operation of God's word upon his heart. St. Peter writes to the same purpose. “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible—by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” That word says, Ye must be born again. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” “That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.” The conscience replies:—I feel it is so: a new nature must be implanted within me, to overcome that old nature, which is corrupt, and contrary to God's written word. The word says again: Christ Jesus came into the world, that as many as believe in him might have that new spirit: might be “made partakers of the divine nature;” might have “power to become the sons of God.” The heart replies: I believe; it is worthy of all acceptance; I believe that he came to take away our sins; to save his people from their sins. “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”

Such, in substance, is the operation of the word

of truth upon the heart. It speaks to the heart ; and under the influence of the Holy Spirit the heart responds. But it *does* respond. It is not senseless, passive, inanimate. Whilst it receives, it also takes. There is an active stretching out of the hand of faith, to lay hold of what God offers and bestows.

And thus men become, indeed, God's *creatures* : not merely by creation, of which they were unconscious ; but by adoption, in which they have exercised a part, and their own will has had a share.

Why then are infants baptized, and received into covenant with Christ, when, by reason of their tender age, they cannot exercise this faith ? Because they promise it by their sureties, which promise, when they come to age, themselves are bound to perform. No man who has arrived at years of understanding, has scriptural ground to be satisfied with his state, without a sense of this adoption : a consciousness that the *word of truth* hath said to him, Here is eternal life ; and that the answer of his heart has been, True, Lord, " this is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Lord, we believe ; help thou our unbelief, and enable us to prove in ourselves the power of thy word unto salvation.

For salvation is the merciful purpose for which the word of truth is given, and the " new creature " formed. It is not intended to stop short of this. It is intended to restrain all those passions, and correct all those affections, which are contrary to holiness, disapproved of God, and unsuitable to his heavenly kingdom. And some of these St. James proceeds to show, as is the manner of all the apostles : who

set forth, first, the mercy of God ; then its effects and consequences.

19. *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.*

20. *For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*

He speaks, probably, of a case in which they were particularly tempted, and liable to offend : they were contentious, impatient, vehement against opposition. Such was the Jewish character ; we see it in all the gospel history : and they were Jews by birth, to whom James was writing. Those who condemned our Lord, professed to be zealous for God. " He has spoken blasphemy." " By our law he ought to die." You would suppose they were *working the righteousness of God*. So those who put Stephen to death had the honour of Moses in their mouths, and pretended to vindicate their law, as if " doing God service." Something of this spirit might remain in the Jewish Christians after they had been begotten by the word of truth. So St. James reminds them that " the fruit of the Spirit is peace : " that " the wisdom from above is peaceable : " that the weapons of christian " warfare are not carnal : " that we must " in meekness instruct those that oppose themselves : " *for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*. And then including all in one comprehensive sentence, he adds :

21. *Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.*

The *engrafted word*—How exact the image ! The

purpose of a graft is to produce fruit of a new nature : it changes the produce of the same stem. And so the word of truth : new qualities succeed the old and corrupt disposition : what in *Saul* was unholy violence, in *Paul* became earnest zeal : and so instead of *filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness*, instead of all that impurity and overflowing vice with which the natural heart too much abounds, there arise goodness, and meekness, and godliness, and temperance, and purity.

Such is the effect of the *engrafted word* ; and thus it is *able to save the soul*, by bringing the soul into a condition to be saved ; and out of which it cannot be saved ; for “ without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

And thus, in conclusion, our thoughts are carried beyond this world of difficulty and trial, and fixed upon a very different state of being, when holiness will no more need to be engrafted on the soul as a produce new and strange ; it will be its own proper nature, when the spirit is made perfect. Here the word of truth has to contend with falsehood ;—to disperse error ;—to subdue a stubborn heart, too often unwilling to believe :—there all will be truth, things seen as they are, no longer through a glass darkly. Here, too, the corrupt nature struggles against the engrafted nature, and one is sadly marred and injured by the other :—there that beautiful promise will be realised, “ Thy people shall be all righteous.” “ For there shall in no wise enter into that kingdom anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.”

Wherefore, as the apostle argues, lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

LECTURE VI.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HEARERS AND DOERS OF THE WORD.

JAMES i. 22—25.

22. *But be ye doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

Persons, then, may *deceive themselves*: be mistaken as to their spiritual state; falsely persuaded that all is well with them, on some grounds which are not safe and solid, and will not support them in the day of trial.

This agrees both with Scripture and experience. There are regular *hearers of the word*, who yet derive no profit from hearing. Nay, is not their condition still more dangerous? “If I had not come,” said the Lord Jesus,¹ “and spoken unto them,”—if they had not heard—“they had not had sin:”—they would have been comparatively blameless: “but now they have no cloke for their sins.”

In what manner it happens that men are not *doers of the word, but hearers only*, St. James sets forth by an example.

¹ John xv. 22.

23. *For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass :*

24. *For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.*

There are two modes of looking into a glass. One without purpose, and casual ; as the apostle says, *straightway forgetting what we saw* : the other for a known and certain purpose : for the sake of comparing what we are with what we desire to be. So there are two modes of hearing divine truth. In the one case we hear, and think no more of what we heard. In the other case, we hear the word, and compare it with what we are : and daily strive to resemble more and more the image presented to us there.

Many fail to do this, who are constant hearers of the word. Christ Jesus is evidently set before their eyes, as the Saviour of all that “ receive him.” But they do not apply to themselves the redemption he has wrought, that their own guilt may be removed, their own sinfulness remedied. So, again they hear the truth, which declares that human nature is corrupt, “deserving God’s wrath and condemnation.” And they do not deny it. But they do not seek that their own corrupt nature may be renewed, and made meet for the presence of God. They hear of the wickedness of the world, and the danger of setting our affections there : still they follow the course of the world, as if it had no dangers. They hear of eternal life ; and look to it, as to something which is to succeed this present state, as youth succeeds to infancy, and age to manhood : but there

is no "laying hold of eternal life," as the one needful thing which must be at all events attained. And so they proceed to the end; *hearers but not doers of the word*: doing nothing which a personal application of the truth would lead them to: till the end comes; and finds at last no Saviour provided, no evil nature remedied, no heaven secured. The gospel has been to them as a sound to which they have been so long accustomed, as to fall upon the ear, and make no impression.

And yet they *deceive their own selves*. There are certain reasonings by which they tranquillise their consciences. They are not as other men are, who trample under foot the Son of God. They call him Lord. They do not despise the word of life. They hear it. They have pleasure in hearing. It engages their intellect. It excites their feelings. All this is in their favour.

But so it was with the Israelites of old; concerning whom the Lord said to his prophet, (Ezek. xxxiii. 31,) "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love; but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not."

Whereas, the great object and purpose of hearing, is to set us upon acting. The word is a seed: and a seed is sown, not that it may lie inactive in the ground, but that it may spring up and grow:

produce a harvest after the likeness of the seed : a people living in accordance with the gospel. The effect of the word is a new life : and if a man lives, he moves ; there is no life without motion, without action. It is a change of state ; and the state is shown by the mode of living. It is a change of state from bondage under Satan to the service of God. And service also implies action. It is redemption from one service to another ; we are "bought with a price : " we are "no longer our own : " made over to him who paid the purchase. "The kingdom of heaven," said our Lord, "is like unto a treasure hid in a field ; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls ; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Thus the hearing of the word leads to the acting upon the word : all is energy, all activity, all earnestness.

And so it proved with those first called Christians. It was no mere name with them, no mere alteration of title, when one who had been Jew, or had been heathen, was baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. So that Paul could say, "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature." He has a new view of life, which gives a different tone to all his feelings. He has a new object of interest, which gives a different turn, a special direction, to all his doings. And it is of such a one that St. James proceeds to write.

25. *But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein,² he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.*

The Lord Jesus has himself pronounced him blessed, and has given his reason too. "He that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will tell you to whom he is like: he is like unto a man who hath built his house upon a rock. The floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon that house: but it falls not, for it is founded upon a rock." His confidence has a real, solid ground to stand upon. He has not merely to say, I am a member of the church of God: "the church built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." He *can* say this: but he can say more than this. He has not merely to say, that he has been baptized in the name of Christ, and listened to prayers in the name of Christ: and commemorated the death of Christ; owning him as Lord. He *can* say this,—but he can say more than this. All these outward signs are his: but they are outward signs; and there may be the outward sign without the inward principle. But it is not so with him: with him is the inward principle, the consciousness that he has committed his soul to Him who died for its

² St. James had been so long used to consider obedience to the law of God as liberty, that he calls the word of God the *perfect law of liberty*, as its proper title. So the Lord Jesus had said: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John viii. 32.

salvation ; that “ he knows in whom he has trusted, who is able to keep what he has committed to him unto the great day.”³ He can say, as the governing motive of his thoughts and habits,—I thus judge : “ that if one died for all, then were all dead ; and that he died for all, that they who live, should live no longer unto themselves, but to him who died for them.” This it is, to be a doer of the word ; and *this man is blessed in his deed.*

And how greatly is he blessed ! He does not wait for eternity to be blessed, though then he will be pronounced so in the sight of the whole assembled world. But he is blessed now. He is not tossed about by every wind, one of God’s own people to-day, and a man of the world to-morrow : he is not in a state of perpetual distraction, between the demands of two opposite masters, God and mammon : he is not afraid of looking into God’s word, lest he should find himself condemned there, as a *forgetful hearer* : he has not need of incessant company to divert, or business to engage him, lest his mind should turn upon himself, and conscience should harass him : he is not distressed at the thought that every year brings death nearer to him : he is not alarmed at the first sign or approach of illness, asking, “ Wherewith shall I appear before the Lord ? ” No. Against all these things he is prepared. He has one object, eternal life. When that comes in conflict with the concerns or interests of this present world, this world is secondary. He has one master. When another requires to have his first service, his answer is ready.

³ 2 Tim. i. 12.

He has chosen whom he will serve. God's word is his delight; it is to him what his treasure is to the miser, or his title-deeds to the heir; for it is the only sure title to the only real treasure; and he can say, with the Psalmist, "Thy testimonies have I claimed as my heritage for ever: wherefore they are the very joy of my heart." Company and business may engage him, in the way of duty, necessary duty: for he has learnt to be "not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord:" but he can bear, nay he can enjoy, solitude: it restores him to his proper conversation, which is in heaven.

At last, when the great enemy approaches, he is a conquered enemy. "The sting of death is sin." When the guilt of sin is taken away, death is disarmed of his sting. And he has ground of confident assurance that his sins have been taken away: the "testimony of his conscience," of the faith in which he has lived: the "testimony of his conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, he has had his conversation in the world." ⁴

So true are the apostle's words, *This man is blessed in his deed.*

We see, then, the danger against which this passage of scripture warns us. The danger, lest we substitute the knowledge of religious truth for the practice of religion. The danger, again, lest we mistake the interest belonging to religious services, the excitement produced when different ranks and ages are united together for the same high purpose,

⁴ 2 Cor. i. 12.

when the mind is gratified, the intellect engaged, the natural feelings roused: the danger, lest we fancy this religion. These things accompany religion, as the shadow accompanies the man; but the shadow is not the man.

There is a way, however, by which we may put our feelings to the test, and ascertain whether the shadow has a real substantial cause. We may examine to what end our hearing leads; what we are doing: doing in obedience to God; doing as disciples of Christ, to advance his kingdom and promote his glory. What do we, which except as his people we should not do? what are we denying ourselves, which except as his people we should not deny ourselves? “What do we more than others?”

If conscience tells us that we have little of this kind to prove that we do not belong to the class of *forgetful hearers*; it is better to listen to conscience now, than to wait till she hereafter speaks more loudly. When the rain comes, and the winds blow, and beat upon your house, you will need the sure foundation which that man hath, who “heareth the sayings of Christ, and doeth them.” He *is blessed in his deed*. And let none, for want of the deed, forfeit the blessing.

LECTURE VII.

THE EFFECT OF TRUE RELIGION UPON THE
LIFE AND HABITS.

JAMES i. 26—27.

26. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

The more we value a possession, the more anxious we are to know that it is secure. St. James points at various signs, by which the safety of the soul may be discovered. Because a man may *seem to be religious*, have many things about him which belong to true religion, and yet be as “nothing” in the sight of God. And he may *deceive his own heart*, by looking partially to his case, and judging himself too favourably. Just as in regard to bodily health; a man might trust to a florid countenance or a ready appetite, and conceal from himself an inward decay of strength which should have warned him of danger. We might justly say of such an one, If any man seem to be in good health, and yet is unable to perform the functions for which health is given, to apply his mind or exert his limbs; this man's health is vain. And this is what St. James says of religion. If it is true

religion, it must order the life and regulate the habits. For example, it must govern the use of the tongue. As he had before expressed himself, it must render a man "slow to speak, slow to wrath." Not because every man who *bridleth his tongue* is religious; but because a man cannot have genuine religion, who *bridleth not his tongue*. A man of calm, easy, natural temper, has little temptation to insolence or petulance of language. Another may have some point to gain, and refrain his lips from speaking "unadvisedly." This does not constitute them *religious*. But the truly religious man, though provoked or reviled, has a restraint laid upon him, that he should not "revile again." Though of warm or hasty nature, through the Spirit he controls that nature, that the fire may not kindle, and he may not "offend with his tongue."

This is one proof, by which the state of the heart is seen. But there is also another.

27. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

True religion will show itself by exciting in the heart a love towards men: a feeling for their wants, their distresses, their sorrows. And it will be active in relieving them, not only because such is the precept of the gospel; nor only because such is the example left by Christ himself, who healed the body whilst he instructed the soul, and was not insensible towards the wants of earth whilst he opened the way to heaven. In addition to this example and

to the precepts of the gospel, there is an impulse in the Christian's breast to comfort and relieve his suffering brethren, just as there is an impulse in the parent's heart to sustain his helpless children. Those whom Christ so loved, as to give himself a ransom for their sins; those whom God so loved, as to send his only Son for their salvation; shall he hold them in no regard? Shall they pine without relief, or grieve without consolation?

This character does not belong to those alone who are largely provided with this world's good. Whoever is so, will impart a share of his blessings to those who have less. But it is not necessary to be rich, in order to exercise this "work of faith and labour of love:" the poor may equally practise the virtues of charity. They may perform offices of kindness towards their afflicted neighbours; support their drooping spirits; cheer their loneliness; drop in words of comfort and advice. In this way they may express their thankfulness to God, who has made their own lot easier and smoother. In this way they show their love to their Lord and Saviour, who has said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

A third rule is added by St. James here, as a part of true religion. To *keep himself unspotted from the world.*

To go through the world without being corrupted by it, is the test of an "honest and true heart." "I pray not," said our Lord of his disciples, "that thou shouldest take them out of the world; but

that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Taken out of it they cannot be; there their duties and their trials lie. *Unspotted* in it they may be; for they have that within them, and that above them, which will enable them to "overcome the world:" to resist its temptations, to oppose its errors, to forego its cares.

Plain rules are thus laid down before us, by which it may be known whether the faith in Christ Jesus, which we profess, has real possession of our hearts or no.

If it has such possession, it will make us conscientious in our discourse; mindful of the purpose for which man was endowed with the distinctive power of speech. We shall "keep our tongue, as it were, with a bridle:" not to stop and silence, but to direct and guide it according to the rules of duty: to turn it aside from what is light and vain, and unprofitable, and uncharitable, into the proper course of discretion, meekness, and courtesy.

Again: the same faith will open the heart to sentiments of compassion, of sympathy with the distresses of others: will incline every one, as far as their opportunities extend, to relieve the calamities which belong to human life, and to diminish its evils.

"So to use this world, as not abusing it," will be the prevailing object of life; to look on things temporal, chiefly as they bear on things eternal: and to be ever governed by the maxim, "Go thou, and seek the kingdom of God."

This is true religion and undefiled before God and

the Father : because these are the habits to which “faith that is in Christ Jesus” invariably leads, whenever it is rooted in the heart. Unless it is producing the disposition and the practice here described, it is not a substance, but a notion ; not a reality, but a name.

LECTURE VIII.

THE EQUALITY OF RICH AND POOR IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.

JAMES ii. 1—7.

1. *My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.*

The gospel of *the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory*, shows that all men are equal in the sight of God. They cannot be equal as to rank and condition. Nothing could make or keep them so. But God does not regard their rank or condition. There is no respect of persons with him. All were alike “dead” in his sight, when he prepared the means for their restoration. And as in Adam all came alike under wrath, even so in Christ may all be renewed unto life, without respect of persons.

Since, therefore, “there is no respect of persons with God,” so there ought to be no respect of persons among men, in such a case as either unduly to exalt one class, or depress another. Where especial honour is due, Christians will give especial honour : but at the same time they will honour all

men, as creatures of the same God, and objects of interest to the same Redeemer.

Such is the rule, and such ought to be the practice. But human nature is disposed to a different course, and outward advantages obtain too much influence, and encroach upon what is due to others. The apostle saw reason on this point to admonish his christian brethren.

2. *For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment ;*

3. *And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place ; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool :*

4. *Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts ?*¹

To show any such partiality, and give any such preference, especially in an assembly for public worship, would be altogether contrary to the spirit of the gospel. When the merciful purpose of God was predicted by the prophet, the leading characteristic was “glad tidings to the meek.”² When that purpose was fulfilled, the proof of its fulfilment was given, that “the poor had the gospel preached to them.”³ And wonderful, indeed, is the provision made for this, and the way in which God’s purpose is continually accomplished. The poor are not despised, as they were by the Scribes and Pharisees ; not left to themselves, as they were among the heathen of

¹ *Judging* and making a difference, having *evil thoughts* ; i. e. being biassed by wrong reasons or motives.

² Isa. lxi. 1.

³ Matt. xi. 5.

old, but are taught those things which Solomon with all his wisdom knew not, which many prophets and righteous men have desired to see, and have not seen them.

Conduct, however, such as St. James has censured, tended to deprive them of this privilege, and to counteract the very purpose for which Christ came. *To have respect unto him that weareth the gay clothing, and say to him, Sit thou here in a good place ; and to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:—*this would have no other effect than to disgust the poor, and give them a bad opinion of the religion which they ought to reverence.

And if we trace such conduct to its source, that is faulty too. *Are ye not then partial in yourselves? Do you not become judges, who are not influenced by proper reasons, but follow the rule of your own perverse and evil thoughts? Rather, be taught of God, learn from the example which he has set, and “be followers of Him, as dear children.”*

5. *Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?*

6. *But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?*

7. *Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?*

Here are two reasons why this unjust preference should not be shown. First, God has shown no such preference. He has set honour upon the poor, and their thoughts ought to be like his thoughts. Throughout the whole dispensation of the gospel,

“he has exalted the humble and meek.” When “the Lord of glory” took on him the form of man, it was the form of a poor man. He who was to raise others to “riches unsearchable,” had not himself “where to lay his head.” And further, when those were chosen who should carry through the world the glad tidings of salvation, they were not the great and powerful who were entrusted with this commission, but “the base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen,”⁴ to bring about the purposes of his will.

And again, of those whose hearts were opened, that they should “attend to the things spoken,” how large a number were of low condition! It was early asked, “Have any of the rulers, or of the chief Pharisees, believed in him?” But “the common people heard him gladly.”⁵ So that the Lord himself found reason to declare, “Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. But woe unto you that are rich; for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full; for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now; for ye shall mourn and weep.”⁶ Because they that had this world’s good were commonly so much enamoured of it, that few in comparison would consent to deny themselves, and follow him who taught them to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.”

Notwithstanding all these examples, *ye have despised the poor*. If they did manifest any such feel-

⁴ 1 Cor. i. 28.⁵ John vii. 48.⁶ Luke vi. 20.

ing, they would act in opposition to what God had evidently shown to be his will.

And, once more, the apostle reminds them how little cause they had to esteem the rich and great merely as such. *Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seat? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?*

There were exceptions to this. When the multitude at Ephesus would have put Paul to death, the *rich man*, the man in authority, restrained them.⁷ And so, afterwards at Jerusalem, “the people ran together, and went about to kill Paul,” when the chief captain brought his force down to the temple, and rescued him.⁸ Still the persecution which the Christians suffered must chiefly proceed from the rich, because the rich had most power to persecute; and therefore, says St. James, in preferring that class, and showing them favour to the injury of others, you prefer those who too frequently oppress the christian cause, who *blaspheme the name* in which you delight to glory.

If there is one place more than another where all pre-eminence of persons, all distinctions, should be forgotten, it is when we are kneeling before God as suppliants for his mercy. “Then the rich and poor meet together. The Lord is the maker of them all.” The next season, probably, when the same assembly of persons is found collected, will be before the judgment seat. And there

⁷ Acts xix. 24—41.

⁸ Acts xxi. 30—32.

we know, all will be regarded according to their spiritual qualifications, and not according to their outward circumstances. All will be there *in vile apparel*, except as far as they have “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb:” all will be *poor* there, poor in themselves; and they alone rich, who are clothed in the righteousness of Christ; they accounted first, who have “adorned the doctrine of God their Saviour” by the sincerest lowliness and humility, the truest meekness and charity.

LECTURE IX.

THE OBLIGATION OF THE WHOLE LAW.

JAMES ii.^o 8—13.

8. *If ye fulfil the royal¹ law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:*

9. *But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.*

10. *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

11. *For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.*

The apostle had blamed the conduct of some to whom he was writing, as showing a disregard of the poor. He now reminds them of *the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. If they made this commandment their rule and guide, they *would do well*. There would then

¹ Supreme, excellent.

be no undue preference of one class to another : all partial *respect to persons* would be done away. But if in this point they continue to err, they *commit sin*, and are *convicted of the law as transgressors*. Whatever pretensions they might make, or hopes they might indulge, were vain : they are “ fallen from grace.” *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one part, he is guilty of all.*

Thus St. James, from the mention of a particular fault which it was needful to correct, is led to lay down an universal truth of great importance. Though it is a truth that we must allow, on a moment's consideration. For we know that God requires the surrender of the heart. We know that faith in Jesus Christ implies the surrender of the heart to God ; and we know that whoever reserves to himself *one point* of the law, in which he disobeys God, has not given up his heart to him ; is not in subjection to him ; is not serving him : and therefore he *is guilty of all* : that is, he is not pardoned ; “ his sin remaineth :” his faith is not such faith as has the promise of pardon.

You will say, perhaps, Is not this to condemn the whole race of mankind ? For who is without sin ? “ In many things we all offend ;” and St. John writes, “ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

True : none are without sin, but without deadly sin we trust that many are. True, we all offend, but we do not all offend wilfully : habitually ; —we do not allow ourselves in sin. We must not, if we have any well-grounded hope. For St. John also says, “ Whosoever is born of God sinneth not :” is not content with sin ; does not con-

tinue satisfied in it; but whenever he finds the flesh lust against the Spirit," whenever he finds the old nature, which is corrupt, rising up against the new nature which he has put on in Christ,—against this he declares war, and manfully contends, and watches and prays, that he may bring every thought and word and work into obedience to God. The true Christian will never feel that he has loved God with all his heart and mind and soul and strength; but still he will never be satisfied with anything short of this; much less will he say, I cannot love God so far as to part with this or that besetting sin. The true Christian will never feel that he has fulfilled the other royal law, of which St. James is speaking, and loved his neighbour as himself; but still he will desire and endeavour so to love him: he will continue in no practice which may defraud or injure his neighbour: he will not deny his rights, nor despise his person. A man who should do this would be *guilty of all*:² so far guilty of all, that he would be as much unforgiven of God as if he had broken all his laws. His punishment might be less severe than that of a more heinous sinner: but it would be no less sure. His exclusion from heaven would be as certain. There can be no salvation where there is wilful, unrepented, unforsaken sin.

And all this is according to clear just reason. You perceive the case. It is the case of a man who is brought under some sense of what is due to God; he is not without the knowledge or the fear of him; but the effect of this fear is only partial; and not-

² γεγωνα παντων ενοχος: liable to punishment of all: as Matt. v. 21, 22, and xxvi. 67.

withstanding his better knowledge, he allows himself to neglect some duty, or persists in some transgression which is contrary to the divine law. While this remains so, he has not altogether surrendered himself to God. He has not given him his heart. *Some* service he will not grudge : *complete* service he refuses to pay. In short, he reserves to himself the right of disobeying God in that point which he chooses.

Now consider whether this deserves to be called obedience. Would it be so among men? Would it be obedience in a child towards a parent? Would it be obedience in a servant towards a master? Would it be obedience in a soldier to his commander? Would it be obedience in a subject to the law of the land? He who transgresses the law in one point, is as surely condemned as if he had committed many offences. Should we listen to a man who pleaded, when accused of perjury, that he had not stolen? When tried for theft, that he had not been guilty of murder?

So that men, as well as God, when they require obedience at all, require complete obedience. Nothing else is admitted. Any single transgression of the law is punished according to the nature of the offence, because it is a denial of the authority of him who ordained the law. The giver of the law, whether it be a parent, or a master, or a general, or a king, expects all his laws to be alike obeyed. If the child, or the servant, or the soldier, or the subject, knowingly transgresses one command, there is great reason to suppose that all would be transgressed whenever there was occasion or temptation.

The same authority which set up the law which is observed, set up also the law which is broken. *For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.*

So much need was there to examine themselves, and make this particular offence, which St. James had been condemning, a ground of inquiry into their state before God. For they must never lose sight of the great truth, that we must all appear “before the judgment-seat of God, to give account of the things done in the body.”

12. *So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.*³

13. *For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.*

If ye allow yourselves in any sin, ye are not “in the faith:” ye can only expect judgment according to the law. And though the law by which ye *shall be judged, is the law of liberty*, and not of bondage; it is still the law by which our lives must be governed, and our spiritual state determined. *Judgment without mercy* awaits him who wilfully offends against the royal law, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. He shall have judgment without mercy, who has showed no mercy.* He shall not partake of the benefit which belongs to the Gospel, and to the sincere follower of the Gospel. For the character of the Gospel is, that *mercy rejoiceth against judgment.* And such also will be the character of the true disciples of Christ. They will be tender-

³ See Note at p. 54.

hearted, forgiving : they will not demand strict justice ; will not be eager to take vengeance, or insist on claiming rights to the full. They deal with others as they desire that God may deal with them. For they have learnt, that if they forgive not men their offences, neither will their own offences be forgiven of their heavenly Father.⁴

And how strongly should this argument affect us, whenever our thoughts are called, as they are by this whole passage, to the holiness of the divine law, and the strictness of the divine judgment ! What reason have we to be thankful, that as in the conduct of Christians towards each other, *mercy must rejoice against judgment*, so in the dealings of God with man, justice has been propitiated, and mercy has triumphed !

But that we ourselves have “ obtained mercy,” one only proof can testify : that in no one point we allow ourselves to transgress : that we “ exercise ourselves to keep always a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards man :”—that we desire and aim at complete obedience ; and though not “ already perfect,” are praying that “ our whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁵

⁴ Matt. vi. 15.

⁵ 1 Thess. v. 23.

LECTURE X.

THE EFFECT OF CHRISTIAN FAITH UPON THE
LIFE.

JAMES ii. 14—17.

14. *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?*

In the sentence which comes before this question, St. James had been alluding to future judgment. *So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.* He had also been noticing a point in which those to whom he wrote had transgressed the law. *Ye are partial in yourselves. Ye have despised the poor.* This leads him on further, to show how vain a christian profession must be, without an answerable life. *What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?*

He seems to suppose that some one might reply to what he had been just urging: You speak of our being *judged according to the law.* But “there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” You speak of *doing well, if we keep the royal law, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* But our salvation is “of grace, not of works, that any man should boast.”

There have always been some to argue in this manner: and the Spirit of God, foreseeing this, has provided an answer in the words of St. James:

who here shows us, not that we are justified otherwise than by faith, but what that faith is by which we are justified: namely, a faith that worketh righteousness.

Suppose, then, a man to excuse himself for not living after the way in which the apostle had been instructing him to live:—for being “a hearer of the word, and not a doer:” for not “bridling his tongue:” for not “visiting the fatherless and widow in their affliction:” for “despising the poor,” and respecting the persons of the rich: suppose him to excuse himself for this, and to say in his defence, “We look to be accounted righteous before God by faith in Jesus Christ, and not for our own works and deservings.” Supposing a man thus to argue, St. James replies: *What doth it profit, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? That faith which he says he has, and which has no works to prove its reality? Can it save him, that he professes to believe in Christ, if he has lived in no way answerable to that profession? Christ’s own words cut off any such expectation; “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” “Many shall say unto me in that day, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works? Then shall I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.”*

St. James proceeds to illustrate this by an example; an example which all could understand. He takes the case of natural affection: that natural

affection which one person bears towards another. We know how this acts when it is a true affection : as it was, for instance, in Jonathan towards David, when “ he loved him as his own soul.”¹ Thus we may learn how faith ought to act if it is to be received as genuine, and how it will act, if it really unites the heart to the Redeemer.

15. *If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,*

16. *And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed, and be ye filled ; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body ; what doth it profit ?*

17. *Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.*

Here the case is supposed, in which natural affection is put to the test. *The brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food.* The friend expresses all good-will towards them : is anxious that they should have relief and comfort : *Depart in peace ; be ye warmed ; be ye clothed :* but these are words only : *notwithstanding ye give them not those things that be needful :* he denies himself nothing, uses no exertion to supply his brother's wants : *what doth it profit ?* Will any one accept this as true and satisfactory love ? Who would value it, or make it a return ?

It is not so when the affection is real, and has possession of the heart. It was not so in the case of Jonathan. Jonathan said to David, “ Whatever thy soul desireth, I will now do it for thee.” But was this all ? Far from it. Jonathan stripped him-

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 1, 3.

self of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle." "And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said, Let not the king sin against his servant, and against David."²

If this is true affection, not only to speak kind words, but to do kind deeds: so it is true faith, not to say we believe, but to keep the commandments: not to cry Lord, Lord, but to "deny ourselves, and take up the cross, and follow him."

The faith which has no reality, and cannot profit, is exactly represented in the parable of the Sower. The seed is sown. In the first case it falls by the way side. The word reaches the ear, but does not pass into the mind: and the man does not *say that he hath faith*: does not profess to believe. But the two next cases describe persons who "receive the word," but do not live according to it: seem to believe, perhaps affirm that they believe;—*but have not works*. In the one case, temptation comes, afflictions threaten, and the man is required in the way of christian duty to resist temptation, to endure affliction. Just as a friend is called upon, if he really loves, to make some sacrifice, to consent to some exertion for his friend's sake. Just as Jacob was required, if he really loved Rachel, to serve Laban seven years, and then claim her in marriage. Jacob's love was strong, and stood the test. The faith in the parable is too weak to bear the trial: the man "is offended: he "falls away." In the other case, the third case proposed, there is a contest for the mastery between faith on

² 1 Sam. xviii. 4; xix. 4; xx. 4.

the one hand, and on the other “the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things.” The present world prevails: faith is not the governing principle of the heart: has not strength enough to “bring forth fruit to perfection.” What, then, *doth it profit?* Will Christ receive as his own, those who confess him with their lips, but in their lives deny him? Nay, he has himself recorded the sentence they will hear. “Depart from me: I never knew you.” “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and I will raise him up at the last day.” But *faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone.*

These words lead to a question, by which every believer in Christ should be daily examining his own state. He should say, *I have faith. Have I works?* That is, does my life agree with my faith, and depend upon it? I believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to be “the way, the truth, and the life.” But unless I follow that way, which I believe to be the right way: unless I obey that truth to which I assent: unless I seek that life, which I acknowledge to be life eternal: *what doth it profit? can faith save me? Faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone.*

But suppose that faith is found to be not dead, but living: not barren, but fruitful: the active principle which is intended to regulate our thoughts and words and actions:—shall we trust to these works? Shall we trust to “faith which worketh by love,” or to works of love which spring out of faith, as the cause or ground of our salvation? No, you

will reply, we trust to no such foundation of sand. For what, after all, is the result even of the most useful life, the most careful practice? It only brings us to the conviction, that we have nothing in ourselves to trust in. It only proves to us that we are aiming at what we never reach, and resisting that which still contends within us. It daily gives us fresh reason to thank God that we have something more sure to depend on: and that "not according to works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us,"³ through Jesus Christ our Lord.

LECTURE XI.

WORKS THE TEST OF CHRISTIAN FAITH.

JAMES ii. 18—19.

18. *Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.*

St. James will not leave the important subject which he had begun, the quality of faith, without sifting it to the bottom. He had before affirmed that *faith without works is dead, being alone*: like a corpse which has the appearance of a man, but not

³ Titus iii. 5.

the properties of a man. He proceeds to prove this: and furnishes a reply to any one who might argue with him, might allege that he had faith; that the promises of the Gospel were made to faith; and that therefore he had a claim to the promises of the Gospel.

Suppose, then, a person to profess this; to profess, that perceiving himself to lie under the wrath and indignation of God, he has fled to Christ for refuge from that wrath and indignation: that he knows that of himself he can do no good thing, and therefore desires to rely on the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ. These are excellent words: this is the true description of faith: this was the faith which St. Paul had, and recommends to others. Still St. James is aware of the deceitfulness of the heart: knows that it is one thing to seek deliverance from the consequences of sin, and another to seek deliverance from sin itself: and easier to rely on Christ as the Saviour of the world, than to obey him as our own Lord and King. Knowing this, he requires a proof, and sign of faith. *Yea, a man may say* to one who thus professed his faith, *Thou hast faith.* Nor would I deny it. But let me behold the testimony of it in thy life. I see not how else it can be proved. Nor do I demand what I do not myself show. *I will shew thee my faith by my works. Shew me thy faith without thy works.* Thou canst not. It is impossible. For faith is hidden in the heart. It cannot be seen in itself; it can only be known by its effects. It is like the life which animates the body. We cannot see it: we cannot tell on what it depends: but this we

know, that if there is healthy life, the man will breathe and move. So if there is acceptable faith, wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit: however deep it lies, it will prove its existence there: it will show signs of life by its feeling and its energy: it will breathe in piety towards God, and be active in love to man.

But the heart of man is strangely inconsistent; “deceitful above all things;” and requiring to be closely examined. So that the apostle reminds us, how easy it is to believe a truth, and yet to act as if we believed it not: to believe it to no good purpose.

19. *Thou believest that there is one God: thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.*

Thou believest that there is one God: thou doest well. It is needful that thou shouldst believe this. All religion must be based upon that truth. “For he that cometh to God, must first believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”¹ But remember, how possible it is to believe that there is one God, and yet to be moved with no pious love towards him, and to show him no service, no obedience! The devils, the evil spirits, who are contrary to God in their nature, and shut out for ever from his presence, *the devils also believe, and tremble* at his power.

Alas! we need not resort to evil spirits to prove this. Who amongst us ever doubted that God is our Maker and our Governor? Yet have we not too often acted as if we were our own makers, and had no God to reign over us? Who amongst us does

¹ Heb. xi. 6.

not believe that Christ will come again in glory to be our judge, and that he will recompense all men according to their works? Yet where was this belief, when last you transgressed against the plain commands of God, and committed an offence which you knew must appear against you at the judgment day?

It is just as possible to believe all that the Gospel reveals, to believe that Jesus was made flesh, and died, and rose again, and yet to live as if we believed not. They are "not the hearers, but the doers of the law, which shall be justified." "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Therefore the apostle allows no one to be satisfied, who can merely say, *I have faith*. He insists that they cannot show their faith to be that faith through which men "have peace with God," unless it is attested by their life and habits. "By this we know that we love God, that we keep his commandments." By this we know that we believe in Jesus Christ, when we obey his precepts and imitate his example. There may be a belief in Christ which has no other origin than our birth and education: which we receive, like our language, from the country in which we were born. More than this, there may be a belief which is strong enough to disturb our conscience; and yet, I fear, a "savour of death," and not "of life:" because it is a body without a spirit: it does not quicken the soul with a new and vital principle: it does not overcome the carnal nature; it does not raise the heart beyond things below, and set the affections upon the kingdom of God and his righteousness. And all this is

done, and must be done, by *that faith* through which a man is justified before God. Such faith is not merely acknowledged, because it rests on history; not merely professed, because it is professed by those around us; but the man has taken it for his own; has been brought by the Spirit to see that Christ Jesus is made unto us of God “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”² He has come to him as “the way, and the truth, and the life;” and he can say with inward confidence, “I know in whom I have believed.” Such faith is not merely a dependence upon Christ and his merits for salvation, as if God had provided a way to bring his people to heaven without their own pains and diligence. But it is a laying hold of eternal life, through the means which the Author of eternal life has revealed. Such faith is approved by the mind, and satisfies the reason: but it does not rest there, in the head only; it occupies the heart: and gives energy and animation to a man’s thoughts, and desires, and practice, just as the principle of life in the body gives strength and activity to his limbs. And if Satan could suddenly destroy this faith, which, thanks be to God, one stronger than Satan forbids;—the whole man, altered and decayed, would show that the former principle of life was gone.

² 1 Cor. i. 30.

LECTURE XII.

GENUINE FAITH PROVED BY WORKS.

JAMES ii. 20—26.

20. *But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?*

21. *Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?*

22. *Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?*

23. *And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the Friend of God.*

Thus St. James pursues the argument which he had before begun, to prove that *faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone*. Any one who took the opposite side, would be sure to bring forward the example of Abraham: of whom Paul has said, (Rom. iv. 2, 3.) “If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory: but not before God. For what saith the scripture? *Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.*”

Is there, then, a difference between the two apostles? This cannot be. All scripture was written under the direction of the same Spirit, and tends to the same end. But Paul has affirmed, “Faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.” Therefore might a man say, I have faith. I fully believe

that Jesus Christ came into the world for our redemption. I have received it from my parents. It is adopted as truth in the country to which I belong. Nay : I have gone back to the history which relates how the religion of Christ Jesus first prevailed and spread : and I perceive that if I doubt of that, I must doubt of everything which I have not seen with my own eyes. For these reasons I believe it. This is my faith : and I trust that this faith will be counted unto me for righteousness.

Here then the apostle James comes in, to prevent error in a case so serious ; and shows the nature of that faith which God accepted in the case of Abraham. Certainly his faith saved him. But observe what sort of faith. *Abraham believed God.* And because he believed him, *he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar. Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? Seest thou how he showed, by his obedience to God's command, that his faith was that sort of faith which influences and changes and governs the heart, and makes the man in whom it is implanted " a new creature."*

Certainly this appeared in Abraham. Through faith he did that, which nothing else could have made him do. And it is this which proves reality, sincerity, in a profession ; a willingness to act upon the profession, though it be to our own distress or loss. In the instance which James had before brought forward, where there was no real love ; where there were kind words, but no kind deeds : the want of real love was proved by the unwillingness to do anything for love's sake. Ye say, *be ye*

warmed and filled ; notwithstanding ye give them not the things which are needful. Thus it is proved that there is no true affection in the heart. On the other hand, it is clear in Abraham's case that there was a true affection. He *was justified*, his faith was established, when he offered his son Isaac. The trial was severe. We are told so in the history ; which begins by saying, that " God tempted Abraham." ¹ A sword must have pierced his heart, when he rose up early in the morning, and took Isaac away from the sight of his mother Sarah, conscious that the mother would never see that son again. A sword must have pierced his heart, when Isaac innocently inquired of him, " My father, where is the lamb for a burnt offering ?" The faith which could sustain a man through a trial of this kind, was indeed a true affection, a vital principle.

Every Christian's faith is brought to a test of the same kind, though not of the same degree. As the heart by nature loves a son, an only son ; so the heart by nature loves worldly things, worldly pleasures, self-indulgence. The gospel message to such a heart is, Take thy sin, thy most besetting sin, which thou lovest, and sacrifice it at the cross of Christ. " If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if through the Spirit ye do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." " If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee. If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee." " Set thine affections on things above, not on things of the earth." " They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." For

¹ Gen. xxii. 1—9.

the world passeth away, and the lust thereof. But he that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever."

Such must be the effect of faith: and by works like these, that is, by a life led according to these principles, *is faith made perfect*. So that the apostle concludes,

24. *Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.*

25. *Likewise also, was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?*

26. *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

Rahab as well as Abraham gave an example of a person saved by faith. St. Paul alleges it, in his epistle written like this of James to the Hebrew brethren scattered abroad. (Heb. xi. 31,) "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies in peace." But her faith was not *a body without the spirit*. Her faith also *wrought by works*. She said unto the two men whom Joshua had sent into Jericho as spies, (Josh. ii. 9,) "I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you." Had she merely acknowledged this, and refused to assist and preserve the messengers, hers would have been *faith without works*, that faith which being *without works is dead*. But it was active faith; self-denying faith; faith which could induce a sacrifice; for she *sent the messengers out another way*, securing their safety, and risking the vengeance of her countrymen. There-

fore *by works was her faith made perfect.* As God said of Abraham, “Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me:”—so it might be said of Rahab, Now we know that thou believest that God has given the city of Jericho to Israel, since thou hast favoured the men by whom the city shall be taken.

Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Not by faith when alone. Ye see how his works must be appealed to, to prove or justify his faith. Do ye know a man, pretending to be a disciple of Christ Jesus, and to trust in him for salvation, who notwithstanding is yielding to some favourite sin, and is not daily striving to grow more and more in holiness, to advance farther and farther in obedience? That man's faith is vain. His life does not prove it sincere. His practice of evil works, or his want of good works, show that all is hollow and unsound, and will not stand in the judgment of God. *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.* The body, when the soul has left it, may have all the appearance of a perfect man; but still it is not a perfect man. So, faith may look well in words, and sound well in profession: but it is worth nothing, unless it shows itself in a life of active obedience to the Redeemer whom it pretends to trust in and rely on.

Observe, however, that St. James does not employ this argument to prove that a person is accepted of God for the sake of any thing in himself. Man's works are to follow faith, and grow out of it; not

to precede it or stand instead of it. Man is justified, first and last, by what has been done for him, and not by what is done by him. He is a son of Adam, and "in Adam all died." If he is delivered from that death, Christ is his life. If he finds mercy of God in the great day, it is "because Christ has made him free from the law of sin and death."

But it is not enough for a man to approve this doctrine, to confess that it agrees with scripture, or even that he finds it suitable to his own corrupt nature: this will not suffice, if, at the same time, he does not give all diligence to maintain those good works, "which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." He may pretend that he trusts not to his own works for salvation, and therefore that *his works* are of no avail. To such as these James writes and assures them, that *their faith* is of no avail. Faith is of no avail, if it does not show itself in a man's life and practice: if it does not cause him, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world," as one who is "redeemed from all iniquity."

This then is the Christian's language, uniform and consistent, when looking to his faith, and looking to his works: God forbid that I should trust in anything, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is my trust: and He who knows the heart, sees what is written there. But I am assured that *faith without works is dead*. Therefore, "herein do I exercise myself, to keep always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards all men." And "my rejoicing is this, the testimony of my

conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity” I regulate the practice of my life, not by the customs of the world or the inclinations of my own nature, but by “the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

Blessed is the man who has built his house on this foundation: “it shall not fall, for it is founded upon a rock.”

LECTURE XIII.

THE WRONG USE OF THE TONGUE REPROVED.

JAMES iii. 1—12.

1. *My brethren, be not many masters,¹ knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.*

It is an evil on one side, to permit offences to go unreprieved. “Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.”² There is an evil on the other side, that of being over ready to censure, and take on ourselves the office of teaching. St. James perceived that this latter evil was most likely to prevail among those to whom he wrote: and therefore he warned them, *Be not many masters.* Be not forward to judge and censure: *knowing that we shall receive the greater con-*

¹ In the sense of teachers, διδασκαλοι.

² Levit. xix. 17.

damnation: knowing that whosoever does this, lays himself under increased responsibility: for it may be said to him, "Thou that teachest others, teachest thou not thyself?" Therefore, "judge not, that ye be not judged: for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."³

And there is a reason, why we should not be hasty to reprove: there is a reason, why if it becomes a duty to reprove, that duty should be performed in a spirit of meekness.

2. *For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.*

This very tongue, which is so ready to employ itself in censuring and blaming others, what proof it gives, that we are daily prone to fall; constantly liable to *offend*! He is a *perfect man* indeed, who is able always to direct his tongue aright: to guide it with discretion, either to speak or to be silent. Whosoever has attained this power, is *able also to bridle the whole body*: to resist the motions of sin: has advanced far towards the fulness of christian excellence.

Will it be thought that a power is here attributed to the tongue beyond what it really possesses? There are examples to show how great may be the effect of what might seem a weak and feeble thing.

3. *Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.*

4. *Behold also the ships, which though they be so great,*

³ Matt. vii. 1, 2.

and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

5. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

The bit in the horse's mouth controls his strength and regulates his speed. The helm of the ship, small and weak in comparison of what it guides, is still able to turn about the whole vessel. Such is the tongue to the man. If loosened and suffered to run at will; if not prudently governed, and directed in the right course; the man is like a horse without a bit, or a ship without a helm. So that the man is what his tongue shows him to be: the tongue "speaks out of the abundance of the heart," and the heart is the man. Therefore, little as the tongue is among our members, *it boasteth great things*: it has great power: it produces great effects. The proud and boasting tongue betrayed the character of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, when he sent a messenger to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, (2 Kings xviii. 32,)⁴ saying, "Hearken not to Hezekiah when he persuadeth you, saying, the Lord will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?" "Now, therefore, let not Hezekiah deceive you, nor persuade you on this manner, neither yet believe him: for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people out of mine hand, and out of the hand of my father: how much less shall your God deliver you out of mine hand?" Such was Sennacherib: and the way in

⁴ Compare 2 Chron. xxxii. 15.

which his message was received equally displayed the character of Hezekiah. He did not return railing for railing, but committed himself to "Him that judgeth righteously." "The people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not." This was to bridle the tongue: so to govern the helm as to escape the rising storm.

Where there is not the same discretion, the same self-government, where the passions of the heart find vent in the vehemence of the tongue, the apostle strongly points out the evils which ensue. *Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!*

6. *And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue amongst our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.*

7. *For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:*

8. *But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.*

9. *Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.*

10. *Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.*

11. *Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?*

12. *Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive-berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain yield both salt water and fresh.*

When the heart is not brought under the influence of divine grace, and its passions are un-

restrained, the tongue flames forth as a fire, kindled from the source of all evil.

But the tongue which *man cannot tame*, and which, when untamed, *is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison*;—may yet be brought into subjection by the Spirit of God, and made to promote his glory. *Therewith bless we God, even the Father.* As David wrote; “Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall declare thy praise.” To this purpose is the tongue designed; thus speaking, it is sanctified; and the mark of God’s people will be that they set a watch over their lips, that nothing shall pass them which does not savour of meekness, faithfulness, truth, and purity.

But, says the apostle, how inconsistent are some who profess and call themselves Christians! *With the tongue bless we God, even the Father.* The Christian’s thanksgiving is: “Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne.” Shall the tongue which has been thus employed be used to revile God’s noblest creatures? *And therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. These things ought not so to be.* They cannot be, where the heart is really under divine influence. There cannot be that envy and strife and hatred, which leads to cursing and railing, if it be not that while we take the name of God in our mouths, our heart is far from Him. We know of sweet fountains, and we know of bitter fountains: but *the same fountain cannot send forth both salt water and fresh.* *The vine* bears one sort of produce; *the fig-tree* has a different fruit: but every tree has its own fruit, according to its nature, which

nature by that fruit is known. So must it be with the heart. The honest and good heart cannot at the same time use the tongue *to bless God, and to curse man.*

Thus are the words of our Lord illustrated, where he has said, “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”⁵

The words are not the only test, but they are one test of the state of the heart: and in that day when “all must appear before the judgment seat of God to receive according to the things done in the body,” by the words it will be seen whether the fountain from which they proceeded had remained under its original corruption, or was purified and sweetened by the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier.

LECTURE XIV.

CHRISTIAN MEEKNESS AND GENTLENESS ENFORCED.

JAMES iii. 13—18.

13. *Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation¹ his works with meekness of wisdom.*

When the disciples asked our Lord, who amongst them should be greatest, he surprised them by saying, (Matt. xx. 27,) “Whosoever will be great

⁵ Matt. xii. 37.

¹ *αναστροφης*, manner of living, without peculiar reference to *discours*: as Eph. iv. 22.

among you, let him be your minister: and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." So among those who were to read this epistle of James, there were many who had a high opinion of themselves, and boasted of their wisdom. He gives them a sign, by which it may be shown: by meekness of spirit, and discreetness of conduct. *Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let his manner of life adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.*

14. *But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.*

15. *This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.*

16. *For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.*

It is a great and rare qualification to know our real character. And many of these evidently mistook themselves. They indulged *envying and strife*; they called it zeal and earnestness. Such may have been the case with those of whom Paul complains; (Phil. i. 15,) "Some preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds." Such did not discover their own temper; gave a good name to a bad quality: whilst they *had in their hearts envy and strife* towards a brother, they prided themselves as being zealously affected towards God: whilst their minds were inflamed with enmity, they would *glory, and lie against the truth*, as if inspired by holy resolution. *But this wisdom descendeth not from above: is not to be*

ascribed to the Spirit of God: it is *earthly*: has worldly objects in view, as pride and personal advantage: it is *sensual*, as part of the natural unrenewed character: *devilish*, such as evil spirits possess and rejoice in. We see this exemplified in the rebellion of Korah and his company, as related in the early history of the Israelites. (Numb. xvi.) "They gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them: Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them: and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up your mouths against the congregation of the Lord?" Such are the "mur-murers, complainers," some of whom have disturbed the church in every age: men who "despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities."^a When this spirit prevails, *there is confusion and every evil work.*

17. *But the wisdom that 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.*

18. *And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.*

We have here a beautiful description of the real character of that wisdom with which the Holy Ghost inspires the heart. *It is, first, pure.* The source is cleansed from which the stream must flow: cleansed from those evil affections and imaginations which would defile and sully it. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." And it is, *then, peaceable*: exemplifying that charity which "vaunteth not itself, doth not behave itself un-

^a Jude 6 and 8.

seemly, seeketh not her own, in honour preferring others before herself." It is *gentle*: not using the weapons of force and violence, but of kindness and persuasion: after the example of Him, who would have gathered the children of Jerusalem together, "even as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings," but they would not. Or as St. Paul conducted himself towards the Thessalonians, (1. ii. 7,) whom he reminds, "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children." This holy temper is *full of mercy*; "not lording it over God's heritage," but looking upon the errors of others with a consciousness of personal infirmity; and "if any man err, restoring such an one in the spirit of meekness." It abounds in the works of righteousness: the *good fruits* which spring from the Spirit of God in man. It is *without partiality*; like its divine Author, "has no respect of persons:" and it is *without hypocrisy*: "in simplicity and godly sincerity" carrying on its commerce with the world.

Such is *the wisdom which is from above*. Surely we may say, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding! She is more precious than rubies, and all the things that that thou canst desire are not to be compared with her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." She *makes peace*, and not confusion; and she enjoys peace and escapes strife. She *sows in peace* the works of righteousness, "has her fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

Lord, evermore give us this wisdom!

³ Prov. iii. 13.

LECTURE XV.

COVETOUSNESS, WORLDLINESS, AND PRIDE
CONDEMNED

JAMES iv. 1—6.

1. *From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?*

Where the gospel prevails, it will restrain those evils of contention, whether public or private, with which the world has too generally abounded. The gospel had not produced this effect among those to whom St. James was writing. So he descends to the seat of the disorder, and asks, *From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not from an inward source, a corrupt heart? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?* From those desires which you ought to resist, but which you do indulge? Instead of contention, instead of strife, there is one way, and only one, by which the people of God will seek to obtain what they desire. They are instructed "in everything, by prayer and supplication, to make their requests known unto God." But it is otherwise with you. You either use violent means to satisfy your wishes, or you ask of God in such a spirit as can obtain no return from Him.

2. *Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.*

3. *Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

4. *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

Here he reminds them of what they seemed to have practically forgotten ; namely, that the Christian has made a choice between the present world and the kingdom of God ; he cannot secure both, but must hold to the one, and despise the other. Their conduct gave proof that they were following this present world ; not living as its enemies, but its friends ; not as those who had renounced its wickedness, and were resisting its allurements, but as those who were minded to be *friends of the world*, lovers¹ of the world. Such persons cannot have fellowship with God ; for God and the world are contrary to one another. They cannot both be loved ; they cannot be served together. This was plainly shown in that mysterious temptation which our Lord underwent in our form and nature.² “The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them : and said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” He might have all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, but only on these terms : “If thou wilt worship me.” He must cease to set God before him, as the object

¹ Φιλία του κοσμου, nimius rerum terrenarum amor : Schleusner. Φιλία is used in this sense frequently in the book of Proverbs. . The word *friendship* suggests a meaning somewhat different.

² Matt. iv. 8.

to be loved with all the heart, and served with all the faculties and powers.

All scripture agrees in confirming the same truth. When a young man of authority and promise came to our Lord, and asked the important question, "*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*"³ It was *the friendship of the world* which caused him to lose his errand, and go away sorrowing. "He had great possessions:" he loved them, and what they could procure; and he could not give up these for the service of God, and the exceeding great reward in heaven. So, again, where we are told that "among the chief rulers even, many believed in Jesus," convinced by the miracles which they saw, and the doctrines which they heard; but "did not confess him;"⁴ the hindrance was, *the friendship of the world*. "Because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." When among those who have received the word, many in time of temptation fall away, and others bring no fruit to perfection; what is the cause? *The friendship of the world*; the love of present things. We are expressly told so. Either "persecution ariseth; or the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful."⁵

Whosoever, therefore, will be the friend of the world, is the enemy of God. We must choose to which

³ Mark x. 17.

⁴ John xii. 42.

⁵ Matt. xiii. 22.

we will adhere. The intent of christian faith is to overcome the love of earthly things, in whatever form they allure. If it has not done this in the heart, it has done nothing to any purpose. “ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father.”⁶ To be attached to these, is to be attached to that which does not unite man with God, but separates man from him.

If they doubted whether such was indeed the case, whether the temptations of the world were so perilous, and the friendship of God so indispensable; let them consult the scripture, and be convinced by “ the law and the testimony.”

5. *Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy ?*⁷

St. James does not here quote any one particular text, but reminds them of the general tenor of scripture; and asks them, Is there no meaning in those passages which speak of the evil in man’s heart, of its deceitfulness, its selfishness, its corrupt tendencies; which declare that *the spirit which dwelleth in us* is contrary to the spirit which God approves and requires?

And, again, is there no meaning in those passages of scripture which promise the grace of God to such as diligently seek him?

6. *But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.*⁸

⁶ John xi. 16.

⁷ Gen. vi. 5; viii. 21.

⁸ This sentence, in nearly the same words, occurs frequently in scripture: as Job xxii. 29. Prov. iii. 34; xxix. 23. Ps. cxxxviii. 6.

Thus they were both warned and encouraged to renounce the love of the world, and seek the favour of God : to keep down the proud, the lofty thoughts which would exalt themselves against his will and counsels, and to cherish that meek and lowly spirit which is in the sight of God of great price, and might preserve to them a friendship better than the friendship of the world. *God resisteth the proud.* "The proud he knoweth afar off." "Woe unto the man that striveth with his Maker." "Pride was not made for man." But "blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly." "To this man will I look, saith the Lord; even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word."

LECTURE XVI.

SINNERS EXHORTED TO REPENTANCE.

JAMES iv. 7—10.

7. *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

8. *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.*

It was the duty of James, as one set in authority, to rebuke those who were not walking worthily of the vocation wherewith they had been called. We perceive, by his language, that there

were many such : many who named the name of Christ, without departing from iniquity ; many of whose corrupt natures Satan had taken advantage, and kept from the ways of “ pure and undefiled religion.” To these he administers, as the case needed, a sharp and severe rebuke. But he does not leave them in despair. The mercy of God is not less long-suffering under the gospel than under the law. The prophets had continually exhorted his people to “ return unto the Lord, for he would have mercy upon them.” And so he invites them still : the language of his word is still the same, for it is, to the end, the word of life to lost and sinful man : and his apostle says, as his prophets had said before, *Submit yourselves therefore to God.* Lose not your eternal hopes by a determined opposition to his will. *Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* Tempted you are, and will be. Satan will place before you the allurements of the world ; will stir up the evil that is in your hearts, and will endeavour to draw you back unto perdition. But there is a stronger power, which enables you to conquer. There is “ the sword of the Spirit ;” there is “ the shield of faith,” against which his weapons cannot prevail. Only be strong, and “ quit yourselves like men.” Instead of yielding to the destroyer of your souls, *resist the devil.* And *draw nigh unto Him,* who invites to a better service. *Draw nigh unto God.* He has revealed the means by which we may draw nigh to him, and has commanded us to use them. “ If any man lack wisdom ;” if the snares of the world encompass him, and the weakness of the flesh betray him, and the way in which he may escape

seem closed ; “ let him ask of God ; ” let his heart ascend to “ the Father of lights ; ” let him exercise the privilege offered to him, and “ come boldly to the throne of grace, that he may obtain grace to help in time of need.” “ The Lord our God is a merciful God.” Like the father in the parable, he sees “ afar off ” the heart which is once more ready to draw nigh to him, and graciously receives the returning penitent. Only let him see, that he is approached in the single way of access, “ through the blood of the everlasting covenant.” Only let him see that there is a full purpose of heart to throw down any obstacle which separates us from him. Your sins, as the prophet said of old, “ your sins make a separation between you and God.” David has expressed the same truth : “ If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” Therefore, *Cleanse your hands, ye sinners ; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded.* Ye that have not “ cleansed the heart, or washed the hands in innocency ; ” ye that, with “ the covenant of God in your mouths,” have yet practised iniquity in your lives ; put away the evil of your doings, and so *draw nigh unto God.* And ye that have tried the vain endeavour to serve two incompatible services, and, whilst ye have brought a part of your heart to God, have kept back a part of that to which he had a rightful claim ; *purify your hearts, ye double-minded.* Purify your hearts from that love of the world which defiles them, and “ in simplicity and godly sincerity ” devote yourselves to the service of your Lord.

Not, however, without that “fear and trembling,” that due humiliation, which becomes those who have “done despite unto the Spirit of God.”

9. *Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.*

10. *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*

Those who had been walking unsuitably to their profession, are here called to a solemn act of repentance. They are not to take their pardon for granted, as if the grace of God were to give a license to sin; as if Christ had died to encourage a worldly, careless course of living, and then at last to clear them from condemnation: but to be *afflicted, and mourn, and weep: to turn their laughter into heaviness, and their joy into mourning.* Alas! it is wonderful how much there may be of joy, where there ought only to be fear and sorrow. Many of those to whom the knowledge of God is revealed, can yet persevere in a thoughtless habit of self-complacency and gratification, whilst living in a manner most inconsistent with his will. “The harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts;” and they remember not, that for all these things “God shall call them into judgment.”

From this senseless state the apostle would rouse them, and bring them to a mind more suitable to their condition. He would have them solemnly turn to God, and mourn and weep, and say, “I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me.” Thus *humbling themselves in the sight of the Lord,* they might still have hope: he

might *lift them up*, might exalt them in due time. If they turned their laughter to heaviness, he might turn their heaviness into joy; if they turned their joy to mourning, he might give them, instead of mourning, the "oil of gladness." For "the Lord knoweth whereof we are made, he remembereth that we are but dust." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

There is much in this passage which may lead us to watchfulness, to humility, and self-examination. We see how those had fallen back into the ways of sin, who had been brought to the knowledge of God, and perhaps had seemed at one time to be delivered from the corruptions of the world. And now they had returned to the world which they had forsaken: they, before whom the truth had been evidently set forth, and who had "subscribed themselves with the name of the Lord." Such is the bias of the natural heart: and so just is David's prayer, "Who can tell how oft he offendeth? O cleanse thou me from my secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, lest they get the dominion over me. So shall I be undefiled, and innocent from the great offence."

LECTURE XVII.

UNCHARITABLE CENSURES AND PRESUMPTUOUS CONFIDENCE CONDEMNED.

JAMES iv. 11—17.

11. *Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law :¹ but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.*

12. *There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy : who art thou that judgest another ?*

Our Lord had prescribed a general rule for Christians: "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged." That is, condemn not others rashly, if ye hope to escape condemnation. "For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again."² But this rule is too commonly neglected. To think harshly and to speak severely of others, is very natural to the heart of man. It gratifies envy, it flatters vanity: and the spirit that is in us lusteth to vanity and envy. St. James, however, alludes to a particular subject which caused divisions among the Jewish Christians, and gave much occasion to their *speak-*

¹ Condemns the law, "the law of liberty," which freed the Christian from ceremonial observances.

² Luke vi. 37, 38.

ing evil one of another. They held different opinions concerning many usages which the law in which they had been bred up, the law of Moses, required, and which some now abandoned, others still obeyed. These two parties were fierce and severe against each other: and are often censured by St. Paul, in the same tone as they are here admonished by St. James. More especially, in Rom. xiv. 3, 4, 13, he supplies a comment on this passage. Speaking of those who had scruples concerning food, and distinction of meats, he says: "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. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Let us not therefore judge one another any more." Such is also St. James's meaning. "One man esteemeth one day above another:" thinks it necessary to observe the old Jewish festivals: "another esteemeth every day alike." He who *speaketh evil of his brother* in this matter, *speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law*, which has declared (for it is "a law of liberty") that neither if thou regardest these things, art thou the better; neither, if thou regardest them not, art thou the worse. Thus thou takest upon thyself to be a *judge of the law*, to condemn the law, which God has approved.³ Thy business is, not to judge the law, but to obey it. But *if thou judgest the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.* Condemning the liberty which God allows, thou art wanting in humility towards him; and speaking evil of thy neighbour

³ See the whole context, Rom. xiv.

without cause, thou art wanting in charity towards thy brother. *Who art thou that judgest another? There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.*

This is a thought which should be always borne in mind, whatever may be the occasion tempting men to *speaking evil one of another*. *Who art thou that judgest?* There is enough in every man to restrain such censures. “He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shown no mercy.” *There is one lawgiver*, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart. And till the counsels of the heart are made manifest, and the secret thoughts and motives disclosed, it can never become clear who hath and who hath not “praise of God.”

The apostle proceeds to notice another error.

13. *Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain :*

14. *Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.*

15. *For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.*

16. *But now ye rejoice in your boastings : all such rejoicing is evil.*

And yet it matters little merely to use the phrase, *If the Lord will, we shall do this or that*. Such a phrase is often a mere phrase of course, and, meanwhile, men *rejoice in their boastings* : really form their plans and take their measures in life with

little thought of God upon their hearts. And the fault here censured, is the want of this reference to God. It is not wrong to look forward; it is not wrong to arrange plans: to act otherwise would frustrate the purpose of life, which would be wasted, not employed. But men may arrange and look forward, and at the same time fully bear in mind that their *life is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*. The great secret is, to keep God always before us: in every thing to study his good pleasure, and follow the leadings of his providence: *if the Lord will, we will do this, or that*: if he sees it good for us, *we will go into such a city, and continue there a year*: if otherwise, his will is still done, and he “ordereth all things well.”

The apostle concludes with a general remark.

17. *Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*

As much as to say: I have shown you where in your practice has been wrong and blameable; not such as might justly be expected of those who have been so well instructed *to do good*. Remember, “to whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required.” “All unrighteousness is sin.” But sin is more heinous in a son who knows his father’s will, than in one who knows it not. Those who transgress under the law, will be judged under the law. And you are under the law of God, before whom we must all appear to give account of the things done in the body.

How corrupt must be the heart, which, though it *knoweth to do good*, is so hardly brought to *do it*, so ready to *do it not!* So apt to think evil, so swift to speak evil, so prone to commit evil! What constant watchfulness is needed, that these wrong propensities may be discovered and restrained: that neither pride nor envy, but humility and charity, may regulate our thoughts and govern our words: and that whatever we desire or seek, plan, or pursue, “God may be all in all.”

“To whom be glory for ever and ever.”

LECTURE XVIII.

THE UNRIGHTEOUS WARNED OF THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD.

JAMES v. 1—8.

1. *Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.*

The apostle here turns his address to those of the Israelites who had been deaf to every call which summoned them to repentance, and were living in despite of God and his laws. “Professing that they knew God, in works they denied him.” *Go to now, ye rich men*: ye that “will be rich,” rich through injustice and oppression; ye that are “rich to yourselves,” and have no regard for others: *go to now,*

weep and wail for the miseries that shall come upon you. Like those before the flood, ye know not : but whilst ye know not, “ sudden destruction is coming upon you unawares.” That shall take place which the Lord whom ye despised has foretold. “ There shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time ; no, nor yet shall be.” And “ your house shall be left unto you desolate.”¹

2. *Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.*

3. *Your gold and silver is cankered ; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire : ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.*

Riches *are corrupted* which are used to no good purpose. Garments—these formed a large part of the wealth of those times and countries—*garments are moth-eaten*, which are not lent to clothe the naked and relieve the destitute : *gold and silver is cankered*, which is laid up in store when it might be employed to the glory of God and the comfort of his people : *the rust of them shall be a witness* against those who have hidden the talent assigned them, which the Lord expects to “ receive again with usury. These *have heaped treasure together for the last days* : and those days shall be days of “ lamen- tation, and mourning, and woe.” Such treasure will only make them a richer and a readier prey to the enemy.

Wealth is dangerous, even when it comes most unexceptionably. But wealth which is ill-gotten,

¹ Matt. xxiv. 21.

obtained either by fraud or cruelty, is indeed a canker which *eats into the flesh as it were fire*. And so it was with some amongst these.

4. *Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped, are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.*

5. *Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter.*²

6. *Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.*

The law commanded, (Lev. xix. 13,) “Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him; the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.”³ Yet the prophets had frequent cause to expostulate against this sort of oppression.” (Jer. xxii. 13.) “Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour’s service without wages, and giveth him not for his work.” The selfishness of our nature takes sad occasion of exercise in these things. One party too often strives to withhold more than is meet; the other to obtain more than is due. The object on one side is to demand as much as possible, on the other, to pay as little. But those who pay have commonly the greater power; and therefore the most usual fault is, “to oppress the hireling in his wages:”⁴ to transgress against the law which prescribed, “Thou

² As victims which are fattened against a day of slaughter, or sacrifice.

³ See also Deut. xxiv. 14, 15.

⁴ Mal. iii. 5.

shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.”⁵ If God thus provided that even the cattle, created for the use of man, should yet have a just support in return : how grievously displeasing it must be to him when *the hire of the labourers who have reaped down our fields is kept back by fraud* : when he “looketh for judgment, but behold oppression ; for righteousness, but behold a cry.”⁶

The cause of such sins is luxury, self-indulgence. One is worn down with labour, whilst another is pampered with superfluity. These had *lived in pleasure on the earth and been wanton, nourishing their hearts*, making their whole lives a day of feasting. Life was given for another purpose : so that Paul says, one “that liveth in pleasure is dead whilst he liveth :” dead towards the real objects of existence, and destitute of the life of God in the soul. And there is no injustice to which selfishness will not lead ; no violence in which it may not end. St. James adds concerning these, *Ye have condemned and killed the just ; and he doth not resist you* : ye have been the death of the innocent, even though meek and unresisting : even though, after the Lord’s own example, “whilst they suffered, they threatened not, but committed themselves to him who judgeth righteously.”

One unhappy effect of injustice and violence in some, is to make others impatient of that restraint upon corrupt nature, which is required by all God’s children. As David hastily argued, “Then have I cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in

⁵ Deut. xxv. 4.

⁶ Isa. v. 7.

innocency." The apostle, therefore, now returns to the faithful, warns them of their danger, and gives them motives for stedfast endurance.

7. *Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.*

8. *Be ye also patient: stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.*

Short is the season during which evil men can prevail, and faithful men suffer. *The coming of the Lord draweth nigh*, the day of recompense to the oppressed, in whom "patience has had its perfect work:" the day of vengeance to the wicked. *Be patient, therefore, brethren.* In things pertaining to eternity, take example from the spirit which is required in the concerns of this present world. Imitate the husbandman, who *waiteth for the fruits of the earth*: who submits to labour and privation for a while, looking onward to a future harvest. And not the husbandman alone: it is the ordinance of God in everything. The youth studies, that his manhood may reap the benefit. Manhood works, that old age may be provided for. All are forced to wait for the reward of labours, not present, but often remote and uncertain. *Be ye also patient: stablish your hearts*: for such is the will of God concerning you: and "blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching," not "fainting," not "weary in well-doing."

LECTURE XIX.

CHRISTIANS EXHORTED TO MUTUAL LOVE AND
PATIENCE.

JAMES V. 9—11.

9. *Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.*

The selfishness of human nature requires this warning: that selfishness which often lingers long, and is among the last evils subdued by divine grace. "Be pitiful, be courteous," says St. Peter: "Love as brethren." This would prevent all *grudging of one against another*.

The parable of the labourers supplies an example of the fault here censured, (Matt. xx. 10.) "When they came who had been early hired into the vineyard, they supposed that they should have received more; and they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal with us, who have borne the trouble and heat of the day."

The "elder brother," in another parable, is also an example. (Luke xv. 25—29.) He is jealous of the favour shown to his brother. And he said to his father, "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends."

In the early history of the church, this sort of *grudging* threatened danger to its peace. We are

told, (Acts vi. 1,) that “there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.”

Another cause of *grudging* existed amongst the Christians, which, as was lately shown,¹ tempted them to “think evil one of another.” Some observed the customs of the Jewish law, and some observed them not. This produced a difference amongst them, which St. Paul frequently reproveth, (as Rom. xv. 1 :) “We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.” And he enforces this duty on the same motive as St. James: “Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” *Behold, the judge standeth before the door*, ready to condemn whatever has been done harshly and uncharitably; to reject all who have not lived according to his commandment, and are not known as his disciples by this sign, “that they have love one towards another.”

There might be also, and there often was in those times, an occasion of *grudging* and *murmuring*, from the different circumstances among Christians. Some were exempt from suffering and persecution, while others were bowed down under oppression. Some had advantages of which their brethren were deprived, and some had trials from which their brethren were free. Guarding against this cause of *envyings* and *complaining*s, the apostle suggests a consolation to such as were subject to these trials. When they were harassed, reviled,

¹ Ch. iv. 11, 12.

brought before judgment-seats, despoiled of their goods, deprived of their liberty, deserted by their friends, they might call to mind that such had been the lot of the servants of God in the days of their forefathers.

10. *Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in former times, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.*

Such had been the argument of their Lord himself, (Matt. v. 12,) “ Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven:” for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” Micaiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, were all *examples of affliction and of patience*. And so, no doubt, were many others, whose names, though not recorded on earth, “ are written in heaven.” So that the conclusion is, *Behold, we count them happy which endure.*² As was said in a preceding chapter, having their faith thus proved, and having thus proved their faith, “ they shall receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love him.” “ Their light affliction, which is but for a moment, shall work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” They need only look back to their own scriptures for encouragement.

11. *Behold, we count them happy that endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord ; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*

They had seen, in the case of Job, *the end of the Lord*: the end to which the Lord brings the afflic-

² Ch. i. 12.

tions of the righteous. Such afflictions had borne heavily upon Job. Greater burthens than he had endured could scarcely be laid on man.³ It required strong faith to believe that God was “dealing with him as with a son, even a son whom he receiveth.”⁴ But “in all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.” And at the end he experienced that the *Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*” The Lord turned the captivity of Job; also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. And the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning.”⁵

Now here was the example for the Christian: the living proof, that God knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, though now for a season they are in heaviness. Scripture compares such trials to the refiner’s fire, to which the goldsmith so submits his gold, that it seems to change its nature, and even to destroy its substance. A spectator might imagine that he held it in no esteem; but in the end it is restored, brighter and more precious than before: and we see that for an especial purpose it has been so treated, that, being purified and refined, it may be worthy to form the conqueror’s diadem or the monarch’s crown. In the same way those are to be *counted happy that endure.* The trial is ordered for them, that they may enjoy a brighter crown hereafter; that the trial of their faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”⁶ And thus *the end of the*

³ Job i. 22.⁴ See Heb. xii. 7—6.⁵ Job xlii. 10.⁶ 1 Pet. i. 7.

Lord displays his *tender mercy*. The prosperity which blessed the conclusion of Job's earthly life, is a very feeble emblem of that everlasting recompense reserved in heaven for those "who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality;" and of whom the Lord has declared, "To him that overcometh, will I give to sit with me on my throne."

Behold, then, why *we count them happy which endure*. Because, though "no suffering is for the present joyous, but grievous;" yet "the time is short," and can bear no comparison with eternity: and "what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

LECTURE XX.

SUNDRY RULES OF PRACTICE RECOMMENDED.

JAMES v. 12—15.

12. But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by the heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

When the Lord Jesus came, among other violations of the divine law, he found the Jewish people addicted to swearing. The third commandment had forbidden the rash use of the name of God. They had invented other oaths; they called "the

heaven," or "the earth," or their own "head" or life to witness, as if they would thus strengthen their assertions. He had required of them, that they "swear not at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne: neither by the earth, for it is his footstool: neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black." St. James repeats the command, and earnestly enforces it: *Above all things, my brethren, swear not*: as much as to say, if you indulge this sin, it shows that there is corruption at the root; for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" and therefore "by thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned."¹

Truly, nothing can more surely disclose an evil and unrenewed nature than the profane habit of swearing: a wanton defiance of God, without temptation, and without return. All that is solemn and sacred upon the tongue, nothing of awful or serious feeling in the heart.

Let then *your yea be yea, and your nay, nay*. Let there be no hesitation, no equivocation in your mind, and there will be no need of an oath to strengthen your words. *Your yea* will be believed as certain: *your nay* be taken as the sure proof of your intention.² "Whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil," and leads to condemnation: that condemnation which God has so clearly pronounced on those who "take his name in vain."

¹ Matt. xii. 37.

² So 2 Cor. i. 20, "All God's promises in him were yea;" certain and sure.

As scripture supplies rules for every case of conduct, so it also makes provision for every state of mind.

13. *Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.*

Is any afflicted? The Christian has no security against affliction. God may see fit to visit him with many sorrows. He may suffer from poverty; he may suffer from reverses of fortune; he may suffer from sickness; he may suffer from the distresses which affect those dear to him. From the calamities which belong to a fallen state, he has no exemption: but he has a resource in them. In everything by prayer and supplication he may make his sorrows known unto God. Even to a man like ourselves, it is a consolation to communicate our griefs and anxieties. How much more, to “cast our care upon God, knowing that he careth for us?” That “his eyes are over the righteous, and his ears open to their prayers?” Misery, however severe, is never without mitigation, where there is the heart to pray.

This, then, is a balm against affliction; and there is also an employment for a different state of mind. *Is any merry?* Does any one enjoy that cheerfulness of heart and spirit which belongs to health and prosperity? Lay that also open before God; “speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs: singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord.”² The prophet rebuked the Israelites, because “the harp and the viol, the

² Eph. v. 20.

tabret and pipe, and wine, were in their feasts: and men regarded not the work of the Lord, neither considered the operation of his hands.”³ If the harp and the viol are used in the festivities of the Christian, it must not be to exclude the Lord from the heart, but to promote his abiding there; they must resound in his praise; they must be attuned to the voice of thankfulness, and express our sense of his mercy, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.

St. James has already made provision for a time of prosperity, and for a time of trial. He does not forget another condition to which the uncertain state of man is liable.

14. *Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:*

15. *And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

Thus, in case of severe illness, they were to seek the aid of *the elders of the church*: those who “were set over them,” and “watched for their souls.” These should entreat God for the sick man, and, according to ancient custom, *anoint him with oil*, the emblem of comfort, health, and gladness.⁴

³ Isa. v. 12.

⁴ The custom prevailed among the Jews, to anoint their sick with oil. In compliance with the custom, the disciples did so when merely commanded to heal the sick. Mark vi. 13. “They anointed many that were sick with oil, and healed them.”

It might prove, as in the instance of Hezekiah of old,⁵ that the *prayer of faith might save the sick, and the Lord might raise him up*: it might prove, that if sin had brought upon him this affliction, *if he had committed sins,—they should be forgiven him*; he “should not die, but live,” and be restored to the favour of God. So, at the prophet’s entreaty, the Lord had raised up the widow’s son:⁶ and so it might often please him to put honour upon his ministering servants, to show how effectual a return is made to the prayer of the righteous man.

Thus throughout the various changes of the Christian’s life, he walks as one who has his conversation in heaven. Affliction leads him to nearer intercourse with God in prayer. Ease and comfort excite his heart to praise. Sickness warns him to look into himself, to try and examine his thoughts, and see if there be any way of wickedness in him. Then, if the infirmities of the body should so depress the soul, that it should faint and fail in the hour of need, there are *elders of the church* to aid, and comfort, and advise. There is man’s intercession upon earth. And—if this is little—there is the blessed assurance that He through whom all this provision is ordained, “ever liveth at the right hand of God to make intercession” there.

⁵ See 2 Kings xx.

⁶ See 1 Kings xvii. 22.

LECTURE XXI.

THE BLESSINGS OF SPIRITUAL ADVICE AND
MENTAL PRAYER.

JAMES v. 16—20.

16. *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

17. *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.*

18. *And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.*

If a man is perplexed with anxiety, or falls into temporal misfortunes, he desires the counsel of a friend. It is a relief to his mind under difficulty to seek an opinion on which he can rely. St. James advises the same resource in the case which is the greatest of all misfortunes, and ought to cause the most anxiety. *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed:*¹

¹ On this foundation the Romish church has built the system of *auricular confession*. Weeds readily spring up; a little seed spreads very widely. Here is only the word *confess*. No mention is made of confession to the ruler of the church, any more than to another Christian.

healed of that worst disorder, a sinful inclination or a sinful habit. If in bodily sickness a man desires the prayers of his pious friends or of the elders of the church, let him seek the same assistance, when he needs it more, in the sickness of the soul. Even bad men have sought and valued the prayers of the good, and have acknowledged that *the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*. Saul entreated the prayers of Samuel: and the impostor Simon (Acts viii. 24) implored Peter and those with him, "Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of those things which ye have spoken come upon me." Indeed, every part of the scripture shows us the honour in which it pleases God to hold the prayers of righteous men. St. James refers to the example of Elijah, taken from 1 Kings xvii. 1, "As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." The same truth is forcibly expressed in Exod. xxxii. 10: when the Israelites had fallen into their grievous sin, and made to themselves an idol which they worshipped in the place of God. "And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now, therefore, *let me alone*, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them." Let me alone. Let not thy *fervent effectual prayer* turn aside the indignation which their idolatry has incurred. But it was turned aside, "when Moses besought the Lord his God;" as if to leave us an example of fact, to prove that which we might be slow to believe. In the same manner that great event, the restoration of

Judah from the captivity at Babylon, is represented as fulfilled through the prayer of Daniel. Dan. ix. 21—23. The angel Gabriel was commissioned to bring him word, “At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee.” Thus an encouragement to prayer is handed down to every age, and a memorial is set up to assure us how much avails *the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man.*

The apostle concludes his letter with an urgent motive thus to pray one for another, and heal each other, and “exhort one another daily.”²

19. *Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;*

20. *Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*

They might, then, *err from the truth.* There was indeed great danger. The rebukes conveyed in this epistle sufficiently prove the danger: prove how ready Satan was to draw back, if power were given him, those who had seemed to escape from his dominion. Therefore, if enemies are on the watch to destroy, friends must be watchful to preserve. And St. James here gives encouragement, if any should *err from the truth*, should be led aside from the true faith or the true practice which belongs to Christians, to rebuke the erring brother, and not “suffer sin in him:” to admonish and exhort him. It might be that he should thus “gain his brother.”

² Heb. iii. 13.

And if this were granted, the recompense should be great indeed. He should *save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins*. For sins confessed, and repented of, and forsaken, are forgiven. And sins forgiven, are *hidden*; hidden from the sight of God: he “casts them behind his back,” as the prophet expresses it: or as St. Paul, they are “blotted out :”³ washed away by the blood of Christ applied to them.

We know, indeed, that thus to convert a sinner is not the work of man, but of God. Whosoever attempts it in his own strength will soon discover how small is the power in spiritual things of one mind over another. But God is often pleased to make use of the warning, the advice, the influence, the authority of his faithful people to fulfil his gracious purposes. And the apostle excites us to this service by the strongest of all motives: *the saving a soul from death*: from that moral, that spiritual death here, which leads to death eternal.

If it were as clearly established in all our minds as it was in the mind of James, that “sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death;” more eagerness would be felt, and more pains taken, to turn a sinner *from the error of his way*. When we meet with one who either in his manner of thinking, or his manner of living, *errs from the truth*, we meet with what is common, unhappily, in the practice of men; too common to be much noticed: we do not apprehend the nature of such error in God’s sight: we do not see those conse-

³ Isa xxxviii. 17. Col. ii. 14; also from Isa xlv. 22.

quences which God has ordained to follow it: and therefore we are slightly moved, slightly affected, and become "guilty concerning our brethren." It is a part of faith to believe that to convert from sinful error, is to *save from death*. So that the apostle, in conclusion, leaves this thought upon our minds: a thought which may justly excite our earnestness, repress our scruples, overcome our natural indolence. Not for the present time alone, but through all eternity, it may be a subject of rejoicing, that through our teaching, our warning, our counselling, one that had erred has been converted, or one that would have erred has been kept stedfast in the faith, and preserved from the way of error.

THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

A. D. CIR. 64.

LECTURE XXII.

ST. PETER ADDRESSES HIS EPISTLE TO THE
CHRISTIANS SCATTERED THROUGHOUT DIF-
FERENT COUNTRIES OF ASIA.

1 PETER i. 1, 2.

1. *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.*

2. *Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.*

The Lord had declared, (Mark ix. 1,) "There be some of them that stand here who shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." Peter was one of those then stand-

ing by. And in him this prophecy was accomplished. He had seen the kingdom of God come with power. Thirty years before, Jesus Christ had been put to death in Jerusalem. And now he had disciples, he had those who professed to believe in him, and were ready to seal their faith with their blood, in all these different countries of which Peter makes mention, spread over a surface of many hundred miles. And to them Peter writes this letter, as *an apostle of Jesus Christ*, as one commissioned by him to promote the fulfilment of his word, and to preach the kingdom of God.

He writes to them as *strangers*, or sojourners. and we scarcely know why he terms them so: whether he chiefly had in view his own converted countrymen, who were now *scattered* as sojourners in Pontus and Galatia and the other countries which he names:¹ or whether he speaks of them here, as he does elsewhere, as “*strangers*² and pilgrims in the world,” dwelling for a time in a land which they were not to consider as their home.

Such, undoubtedly, they were. They had become citizens of “a better country,” being *elect* or chosen to such favour, *according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*. So Paul says concerning the Ephesians, that God had “chosen them before the foundation of the world, having predestinated them

¹ That Peter could not *only* have had these in view, is plain from many passages in the epistle: and especially ii. 10.

² He uses the same word in that sense in chapter ii. 11. “I beseech you, as *strangers* and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts.” So likewise St. Paul, Heb. xi. 13. “Confessed that they were *strangers* and pilgrims upon the earth.”

unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”³

And, indeed, it was a wonderful proof of especial mercy, that God had made known to them the way of salvation, hidden from so great a multitude, and hitherto revealed to so few. Still greater was the blessing, that he had “opened their hearts to attend to the things spoken,” and not left them to remain in ignorance, darkness, wickedness. “Upon them had the light shined.” “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”⁴

There is much here to make us humble: humble in mind, and humble in spirit. Humble in mind, to think how little we understand of God’s dealings with man: “how his thoughts are past finding out.” “He setteth up one, and pulleth down another:” and yet “there is no unrighteousness with him.”

And then, we who are placed in the same condition as the strangers to whom Peter writes, may feel humbled in spirit too: remembering that it is God who causes any one to differ from the most unenlightened heathen. And also remembering, (as who has not reason to remember?) how poor

³ Eph. i. 4, 5. “We should not be anxiously inquiring about the *election* of our brethren, which is rather to be reckoned from their *calling*: so that whosoever have been enrolled among the members of the church (*co-optati*) by faith, should be held as elect. For God separates them from the rest of the world, which is a sign of election. It does not contradict this, that some fall away, and others are merely pretenders: for this is the judgment of charity, not of faith, when we esteem all as elect, on whom the mark of divine adoption appears.”—*Calvin in loco*.

⁴ Matt. xi. 26.

and unworthy a return we have made for the distinguishing mercy which has called us to “so great salvation.”

Peter next mentions *to what* these Christians were chosen: namely, *through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.*⁵

What he puts second in order is really first. They were first chosen to be purified from the stain of sin through that blood which “cleanseth from all sin.”⁶ The phrase is taken from the rites in use amongst the Jews. In their sacrifices, “the vessels of the ministry” were sanctified by being sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice. It is an example, how those who are partakers of God’s mercy are purged from guilt by the atoning blood of Christ, the one great sacrifice, sprinkled upon the heart. And as they were chosen to be thus purified from former sins, so they were also chosen *unto obedience*; to “walk before God with a perfect heart,” as “a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Such was the blessing which had been vouchsafed them, *according to the foreknowledge or design of God* “from the foundation of the world.”

Change the disease of the soul for a bodily disease, and we may easily illustrate this. There were many lepers in Israel in Elisha’s time: but to none of these was the prophet sent, though Naaman the Syrian was delivered from his le-

⁵ “Peter gathers their election not from the secret counsel of God, but from its effect; since he places it in sanctification.—*Calvin ubi supra.*

⁶ See Heb. ix. 21—23.

prosy.⁷ So there are multitudes of sinners in the world ; but to few comparatively is the word of salvation sent, as it had been made known to *the strangers scattered throughout Pontus and Galatia* : and fewer still have their hearts opened, that they should “ not receive the grace of God in vain.” It had, however, been “ given to these to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.” They were selected for this mercy *according to the foreknowledge of God the Father* : after the same manner as in the providence of God Naaman was made acquainted that there was “ a prophet in Israel ” who would recover him of his leprosy.

Naaman, introduced to Elisha, was told to go and wash in Jordan seven times, and he should be clean. He obeyed. And the leprosy which had been upon him was healed : his flesh came again “ as of a little child.” An example of the manner in which those who receive by faith the offer of the gospel, and are *sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ*, “ wash away their sins,” and are accepted of God as “ without spot and blameless.”

But this is not all. Naaman, returning home as a new creature, was no longer an idolater, but a worshipper of the true God. He declared, “ Thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord.”⁸ And so those who are sprinkled with the blood of Christ, are *elect unto obedience* : that they no longer should “ live the rest of their time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.”

⁷ 2 Kings v. Compare Luke iv. 27.

⁸ 2 Kings v. 17.

Peter also tells us, how this sanctification is effected. *Through sanctification of the Spirit.* There must be an agency by which this change is wrought: and the Spirit is the agent. “Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” And thus the merciful design of God is accomplished; and they who are called according to his purpose, are made his children by adoption, walk religiously in good works, and are at length received into his heavenly kingdom.⁹

For them St. Peter prays, that having peace with God, they may serve him with a quiet mind. *Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.* That *grace*, in proportion to which their peace should be, leading them *to obedience*: and that *peace*, which comes from *the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*, which this world can neither give nor take away. *This grace and peace be multiplied unto you:*” that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith: that being rooted and grounded in love, ye may be able to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God.”¹

⁹ See Article xvii.

¹ Eph. iii. 17—19.

LECTURE XXIII.

THE CHRISTIAN KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD.

1 PETER i. 3—5.

3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*

4. *To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,*

5. *Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

St. Peter writes here with the liveliness of one who had experienced the blessing of which he speaks so thankfully. He remembers the errors and the ignorance in which he had been himself involved, the doubts and fears from which he had been relieved. He was not born like ourselves in the midst of light, opening gradually upon the eyes of the understanding as soon as they are able to receive it. He had been himself in darkness, till the light broke suddenly upon him.

With some remainder of the feelings thus occasioned, he exclaims, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively*

hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

“It is appointed unto all men to die:” and without the gospel, all beyond was gloomy uncertainty, or dismal fear. *Blessed be God, he hath begotten us again*; bestowed on us a new life, and opened before us an everlasting hope, made sure *by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*. “For as we believe that Jesus died, and rose again; even so” we believe that “them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him:” *bring to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.*

Thus is the Christian *begotten again*: receives a second life. “The wages of sin is death;” and he has sinned:—“in Adam all died;” and he is in Adam, according to the nature which he brought into the world:—but in Christ Jesus he partakes of a new nature, springing up unto everlasting life, and unspeakable glory.

And now the apostle describes, as he proceeds, the character of those to whom the inheritance belongs: which is, he says, *reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

There is much to be considered in this sentence. The Christians are represented as under protection; under guardianship: *kept* as in a garrison;¹ for such is the exact meaning of the word. And care of this kind implies two circumstances: danger on the one side, and interest on the other. What is diligently guarded, is guarded for both these reasons: it is valuable: and it is exposed to danger. And this is

¹ φρουρουμενοι.

the Christian's state. He is in an unfriendly country, and he has an enemy ever watchful to take him by surprise: but against such peril he is guarded by the Saviour to whom he is dear, by the God whose child by adoption he has become. He is not taken out of danger, but preserved in danger. "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."² Thus spake the Lord to Paul in a vision. He was *kept by the power of God*. How kept, we are not told: no visible arm protected him; and yet he was secure. And there is an universal promise of the same nature to every Christian: God "will with the temptation make a way to escape, that he may be able to bear it."³

In truth, he carries about with him, and has within him, the grounds of his safety: he is kept by the power of God, *through faith*. Faith is the instrument through which the power of God acts upon him, and sustains him in spiritual danger. By faith he clings to God; as a drowning man may cling to the plank which supports him above the water. And this illustrates what is meant, when it is said, as it often is said, that we are saved by faith. Strictly speaking, faith is not the deliverer, but the Lord Jesus. The case is like that of one preserved from shipwreck, of whom we might say, he is saved by clinging to the plank. The plank is really the preserver; but unless he had clung firmly to it, the plank could not have saved him. In the same manner the Christian is *kept by the power of God* and it is *faith*, faith ex-

² Acts xviii. 9.

³ 1 Cor. x. 13.

isting and actively operating in his heart, which brings him within the reach of that power, and secures and retains its aid. His faith would fail in the hour of temptation, if the power of God did not give him a degree of strength which his nature has not: and that strength is supplied, because, through faith; “ he dwells in Christ, and Christ in him; he is one with Christ, and Christ with him.”

The final end is man's salvation. To this he is kept: *kept unto salvation ready to be revealed at the last time.* God has prepared a kingdom for him; and at the proper season (that season “ of which no man knoweth”) he summons him to enjoy it: as the Lord said to his apostles, “ I go to prepare a place for you; and I will come again and take you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”⁴

Such is the plan of mercy, by which the believers in Christ are redeemed from destruction. They are called to take his yoke upon them, and learn of Him. They through grace obey the calling. Guided by his laws, and strengthened by his strength, they go forth to contend against an evil world and a watchful adversary. Betrayed by frailty from within, they would perish if left to themselves; encompassed by temptation on every side, they could not stand in the hour of trial, but that “ underneath them are the everlasting arms,”⁵ and they *are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.*

And if it is an humbling truth, which I do not deny, that man needs this support: to be assured

⁴ John xiv. 2.

⁵ Deut. xxxiii. 27.

that he will be thus supported is most encouraging to one who is "working out his salvation with fear and trembling." For such an one knows his own weakness: knows the frailty of his best resolutions: knows the waywardness of his heart: its proneness to run back to the things which it had vowed to leave, and to neglect the better part which it had deliberately chosen.

Such an one has the very comfort which he needs, when he is assured that *the power of God* is employed to preserve him: to maintain what little he has of holiness, and to supply what is still defective: to give "grace for grace." He is not ashamed to say, Lord, I am weak, "undertake for me!"⁶ Let thy power rest upon me, and *keep me to salvation*.

LECTURE XXIV.

THE CHRISTIAN'S LOVE AND JOY IN CHRIST JESUS.

1 PETER i. 6—9.

6. *Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.*

Such was the state of mind with these early Christians: a state of habitual satisfaction, and even of thankful rejoicing, but not without occasional

⁶ Isa. xxxviii. 14.

disturbance. Still the cloud, even though it were a thick and heavy cloud, was but *for a season*: there was a bright and glorious sun beyond. The general tenor of their feelings was that of persons conscious of their favoured lot, though for a time they might *be in heaviness through manifold temptations*. For, they were assured that if there was temptation, there was reason for the temptation. It was *needful* for them.

7. That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Affliction therefore, in whatever shape it came, whether persecution, or poverty, or loss of friends and possessions, had an object and a design. If they were *in heaviness*, there was need that they should be in heaviness; as there is need that gold should be exposed to the refiner's fire. St. James begins his epistle with the same argument: as the condition of Christians in that age required. "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations." They that suffer, need support and consolation; and the Christians of that day could only "enter into the kingdom of God through much tribulation." It often happens now that a Christian's trial is rather that of prosperity than of adversity: but very different was the case with those to whom James and Peter wrote: and they must be encouraged by the promise given "to him that overcometh," by knowing that the man "who endureth unto the end shall receive the crown of life." As

gold, which has been tried and purified *with fire*, is approved, and chosen by the workman for the highest purposes : so the faith which has come out uninjured from temptation will be *found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*

Then, having named that name, he kindles as a man is wont to do at the mention of his dearest friend, or most valued benefactor. He breaks forth into the expression of those feelings which he knew the brethren entertained towards their Lord and Saviour.

8. *Whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*

Two affections towards the Saviour are here spoken of: the *loving* him, and the *rejoicing* in him.

There must be a reason for these feelings. There must be a reason for this love. We cannot love God or man without a moving cause. And the cause why the Christian loves the Lord Jesus Christ is, that he is the author of all his hopes. He looks to himself, and sees that he has offended against God. And what has he to offer, that God may be appeased ? “ Wherewith shall he come before the Lord ? ” Like the debtor in the parable, he has nothing at all to pay, when Christ steps in and pays the whole debt : “ gives his life a ransom for many.” Can he fail to love him to whom he owes a benefit like this ?

But again, he looks towards himself, and finds corruption within. He "finds a law, that when he would do good, evil is present with him." "Who shall deliver him?" Once more he turns to the same Redeemer, from whose grace he may receive both the inclination and the power to obey: so that he may be enabled "to do all things through Christ who strengtheneth him."

Can he fail to love that gracious Being, who has first prepared an eternal inheritance for him, and is now preparing him to enjoy it, and take possession?

This, however, is a feeling which can be only understood by those who have raised their thoughts beyond this present world, and set out in earnest to seek the kingdom of God. They who have never seriously considered the death which is before them, or the judgment which is to follow, can see no reason why the Saviour should be desired or loved. Having never felt the burthen of that debt which lies upon them, they feel no gratitude towards him who pays it. Having no inclination to be purified from a sinful nature, the author of a new nature has no value in their eyes. As the prophet said, "There is no beauty that they should desire him."

It is not till one begins in earnest to provide for his everlasting salvation, that he can enter into the expression of the apostle concerning Jesus Christ, *whom, having not seen, ye love*. Till then, he hears his name as the name of a Master who demands his service, or a Ruler who commands him to change his way of life, and leave the things to which he is too much attached, the only things of which

he has learnt the value. But when he once determines within himself, that this life is nothing to him, if only he can “attain that world, and the resurrection from the dead,” then he will love the gracious Lord, who has opened the gates of heaven to him; who has reconciled him to God, and given him an inheritance among the saints in light.

2. The other account given of Christians is, that they *rejoice* in Christ Jesus : rejoice in him *with joy unspeakable and full of glory* : joy which realises the prophet's words, (Isa. lii. 7,) “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace !”¹

Our Lord, in one of his parables, represents a debtor, who, owing much and having nothing at all to pay, was “to be sold with his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.” But the creditor had compassion on him, and forgave him all that he owed. That man would *rejoice* in his benefactor. And so a criminal respited from punishment through the intercession of some powerful friend, *rejoices* in his preserver.

In the same manner the Christian feels, that if he is “not appointed unto wrath,” it is through the “one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus :” and that if his transgressions are blotted out, it is because the death of Christ has made satisfaction for them all ; full, complete satisfaction. This he believes, and believing, rejoices with joy unspeakable. It exactly meets his wants, and calms his fears. “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord Almighty.” And what are we his creatures ?

¹ Matt. xviii. 25.

Weak, erring, sinful. "We have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." O how short of that glory have we come! "Who can understand his errors?" Who can enumerate the times, in which by thought, word, and deed, he has offended the divine Majesty! Then how delightful the language of the Gospel, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" Behold an "advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins," who is able to "present us pure and blameless before the throne of God." Able and willing. Able, because he can plead the full, perfect, and sufficient atonement which he has made; and willing, because "having himself suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." In Him, therefore, we have "all things which pertain to life and godliness:" we have "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" and having this, *we rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*

St. Peter finishes his sentence, by calling that to mind which is the conclusion of the whole.

9. Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

The desire of this first led them to the Redeemer. The promise of this first made them delight in him, made his word glad tidings to them. The hope of this made them joyfully renounce all earthly things unsuited to it: made them bear cheerfully the trial of their faith, the temptations which brought them into heaviness. And this which they desired, which

they hoped for, and which Christ had promised, was already theirs ; they were in present possession of it, says the apostle : it was not a blessing for which they were to wait, and now know nothing of ; not merely a pardon to be made over to them at some future day : but they were then *receiving it* ; being justified by their faith, they *had peace with God*, through Jesus Christ. Their love of the Redeemer, their rejoicing in him, were testimonies of this : and as long as they continued to rejoice in him, and to love him, so long the *end of their faith* was sure. For they could not really *love him*, and walk in a way contrary to his commandments : they could not *rejoice in him*, without desiring to live to his glory. And the living to his glory, and the following his laws, are the evidences of that faith of which the end is, *the salvation of the soul*.

One great use of this passage is, to show us ourselves ; it holds up a glass, by which we may learn how far we are Christians indeed. For the apostle describes such, as lovers of Christ : *whom having not seen, ye love* :—as trusters in Christ : *in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing* :—as rejoicers in Christ : *ye rejoice in him with joy unspeakable, and full of glory* ; in its nature like that of an angel's joy.

Our first impression is, that they who felt so deeply and so sensibly, had advantages which we have not, and more might be expected from them than from ourselves. But it was not so. Had they lived with our Lord on earth, heard his discourses, witnessed his sufferings ? St. Peter is particular in

telling us that they had not. Many who had heard his discourses and seen his miracles, were amongst his bitter enemies : but these who rejoiced in him and loved him, had no more looked upon him with their bodily eyes than we ourselves. *Whom not having seen, ye love.* They were among those of whom our Lord spoke, when he said, “ Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.”¹

By faith, then, these were led to value the Redeemer : by considering his words, as related by those who heard them : by receiving his assurances, and pondering them in their hearts. Faith, therefore, is capable of raising the affections, and bringing them to that love which is due to a Saviour, and to that joy which springs from the blessings of redemption.

If, therefore, any are disposed to say, we believe : God help our unbelief ! We love ; but it is a feeble spark : We rejoice, but it is with trembling : How can we learn to believe more firmly, to love more truly, to rejoice more heartily ? The answer is, According to the degree of your faith, will be the degree of your love and joy. And we know how faith is increased. “ Faith cometh by hearing.” Faith cometh by prayer. Faith cometh by meditation. Faith cometh by a hearty desire, that the religious duties we practise, and the word of God we study, may enable us to “ grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ :” and so lead us to the *end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.*

¹ John xx. 29.

LECTURE XXV.

THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF PROPHECY.

1 PETER i. 10—12.

10. *Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.*

11. *Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*

“Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them: and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”¹ So the Lord Jesus had declared: and such is the sentiment repeated by the apostle here. He is reminding the Christians of the greatness of the salvation wrought for them and offered to them. And he gives this proof of it. Those who were employed of God to *testify of it beforehand* were eager to search into its mysteries, which they revealed to others, but which were not clearly disclosed to them. They laid the foundation of the building: they helped to raise it: but they knew not the full and perfect plan of the great Architect, and they were

¹ Luke x. 23, 24.

not permitted to see the finished work. They *prophesied of the grace that should come.*

Isaiah, for example, foretold a time, (xxxii. 1, 2,) when a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest: as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." But this and other like blessings, which he taught a future generation to expect, he did not fully comprehend: he did not perceive how God should send his Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh," that the "man Christ Jesus" might be a hiding-place and a covert from the wrath revealed against all unrighteousness: he could not have explained how he should pour out his spirit upon his disciples, as rivers of water in a dry place: how the penitent sinner should find shelter under his cross, as a traveller in a weary land reposes under the shadow of a rock till the fury of the sun be overpast, and he can proceed on his way refreshed and rejoicing.

Isaiah said again, (liii. 5,) "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." But we cannot suppose that Isaiah foresaw the scene in Pilate's judgment-hall, or had a view of the cross before his eyes, on which the offering for sin should be made; any more than Moses, when he "lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," that whoever looked upon it should live, could have explained the type which he left to future ages, or have said to the Israelites, "So shall the Son of man be lifted up," that all

had testified of a grace and a glory to come, into which they *inquired and searched diligently*, but which they did not behold with their own eyes, or fully comprehend in their minds.

12. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven : which things the angels desire to look into.

The Holy Ghost sent down from heaven had taught the apostles how God had fulfilled, by the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh, all the things which he had spoken by the mouth of the prophets to successive generations. As Jesus said to the disciples at Emmaus, (Luke xxiv. 26,) “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scripture the things relating to himself.” And thus light was thrown upon mysteries “which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God, to the intent that even unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”^s For this mystery, this manifold wisdom, this eternal purpose, is not interesting to mankind alone. *Which things the angels desire to look into.*

That in which angels are interested, is the method prepared of God for the restoration of man

^s Eph. iii. 10.

from the ruin caused by sin. Nor can we wonder if that which the Son of God accomplished, is an object of concern to the angels which surround the throne. It is not, indeed, a mercy which they need: their condition is not affected by it. But they see in it the eternal interests of multitudes of immortal souls: they see in it what man at present cannot see, but shall know hereafter: the astonishing exercise of the divine attributes; the goodness, the holiness, the justice of God.

The wonder is, not that *angels should desire to look into these things*, but that man, in general, should be so careless concerning them, and in his best estate so inadequately affected by them. Such is the impression which this passage should leave upon our minds: the grandeur of that scheme, wherein God has displayed the riches of his grace to man: that “in the dispensation of the fulness of time he might gather together in one all things in Christ.” From age to age glimpses appeared of the light which was hereafter to break upon the world: till at last the full purport of these prophecies was disclosed, and it might be said to Jerusalem, no longer in the language of prophecy but of reality, “Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.”⁹

In vain, however, is the scheme of mercy thus prepared, thus predicted, and thus developed in its full accomplishment, unless the Spirit which directed it shine also in our hearts, “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”¹⁰

⁹ Isa. lx. 1.

¹⁰ 2 Cor. iv. 6.

LECTURE XXVI.

THE CHRISTIAN'S NEED OF HOLINESS.

1 PETER i. 13—21.

13. *Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace which is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*]

We read concerning the prophet Elijah, that having received a divine commission to proclaim abundance of rain to succeed the three years of drought, "the hand of the Lord was upon him, and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel."¹ Those persons to whom Peter wrote, had also received a message from God: and he therefore urges them to *gird up the loins of their mind*, and run with patience the race that was set before them, looking to "the end of their faith," the blessings awaiting them in the kingdom of God. They had been brought by a new adoption into a glorious relationship; and as their state was changed, they must order the course of their lives in agreement with it.

14. *As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance:*

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 46.

15. *But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation :*

16. *Because it is written, Be ye holy ; for I am holy.* ²

The sovereign of a land addresses himself to the meanest of his subjects, and offers to receive them into his confidence, to engage them in his service, to reward their fidelity with all the honours of his kingdom. From that time their circumstances are altered, their condition is a new condition : and their pursuits and habits must be changed in accordance with their prospects and expectations. This is the idea suggested by the apostle's words. Being made the children of God, with the promise of his inheritance, you will no longer live as the children of this world who have no prospects beyond it: you will not *fashion yourselves*, order your lives, as formerly *in your ignorance* of what God has prepared for his people : but adapt your habits to the high destiny to which you are invited. *He who hath called you is holy ; so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.* “ Whosoever hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure.” ³

Let none be disposed to say, that the scripture is here mocking us ; imposing upon our frailty a task which it can never fulfil. No doubt, the Christian's state would be miserable, if this which is set before him as the height which he shall aim at reaching, were the condition of his acceptance with God : viz. that *he be holy*, after the measure of the Holy Being who hath called him. ⁴ We must repeat Job's ques-

² Levit. xi. 41.

³ John iii. 3.

⁴ *κατα τον καλεσαντα υμας αγιον.*

tion : “ What is man that he should be clean, or he that is born of a woman that he should be righteous ? ” ⁵ The most earnest and ardent of God’s children will never attain the holiness which he himself desires and aspires to ; much less will he be holy as *he who hath called him is holy*. “ God knoweth whereof we are made, and remembereth that we are but dust.”

But as, on the one hand, we should be hopelessly wretched if we looked to our own holiness as the foundation of God’s favour : so, on the other hand, our condition is full of danger, if because of God’s favour we excuse our want of holiness. His favour is designed not to dispense with our endeavours, but to encourage them. The gospel sets God before us acknowledging us as his children : and then says, “ Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” ⁶ But the gospel does not say, Unless ye are thus perfect, God will disown and disinherit you. One would justly be disowned and disinherited, who, when commanded to climb the summit, were to sit down contented on the plain, and trust that Christ would elevate him. But they will not be rejected, nor will Christ be ashamed to own them as his people, who have used all diligence to ascend the height which yet they have never reached, nor ever will reach, till they are admitted among “ the spirits made perfect.” St. Paul, in his own practice, has left us the rule for ours ; saying, “ I count not myself to

⁵ Job xv. 14.

⁶ Matt. v. 48.

have apprehended ; but this one thing I do ; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”⁷

Here then is one motive to holiness : the holiness of him into whose favour they had been brought, and in whose service they were enrolled. But this is not the only motive. The apostle justly urges, in addition, the greatness of the price which had been paid for their redemption, and the mercy which had made them partakers of the blessing.

17. *And if ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear :*

18. *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers :*

19. *But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot :*

20. *Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you ;*

21. *Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.*

Captives taken in war, or by any means reduced into bondage, are often ransomed by *silver and gold*. That which is their value to those who have purchased them, is given in their stead, and the bondman is set at liberty. If a large ransom is received, it is proof either of the high value which they bear

⁷ Phil. iii. 13.

in the eyes of their possessors, or of the esteem in which they are held by those who provide the ransom. And yet, what are *silver and gold, corruptible things*, short-lived treasures, compared with the price of your redemption, *the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot?*

Forasmuch, then, as God has purchased you to his service at so great a price, and has encouraged you to *call upon him as Father,—pass the time of your sojourning here in fear*: in fear, lest you should act unworthily of his mercy: in fear, lest “a promise being given you of entering into his glory, any of you should seem to come short of it.”⁸ *God, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man’s work.* And if they whom he has called to holiness, are not holy in their conversation: if they whom he has redeemed, lead the same lives as those who are still in bondage to Satan, they defeat the purpose of God’s mercy, and count themselves unworthy of eternal life. They reject the mercy, too, which is so much the greater, because to you that has been granted, which others had long looked for, but had not enjoyed. The manifestation has been reserved for you, of that which had been *fore-ordained before the foundation of the world.* The promise had been made to the fathers: but they received not the fulfilment, “God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”⁹

⁸ Heb. iv. 5.⁹ Heb. xi. 40.

All these were additional reasons why they should *pass the time of their sojourning here in fear*. Not in that servile “fear which hath torment” with it;¹⁰ and from which those are relieved who are at peace with God through Jesus Christ. But in that wholesome fear, which a man feels who has a precious treasure, and guards it with watchful care. There would be great cause to doubt whether a man really valued a possession, which he had no fear of losing. In this sense, “happy is the man that feareth always:”¹¹ far happier than another, who may think that he stands so secure, as to take no “heed lest he fall.”

LECTURE XXVII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S NEED OF BROTHERLY LOVE.

1 PETER i. 22—25.

22. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

The more separate and distinct any party is, the more needful it becomes that they should be cordially united among themselves. The Christians to whom the apostles wrote, were a distinct and separate party: surrounded by Jews from whose faith they

¹⁰ John iv. 18.

¹¹ Prov. xxviii.

had turned aside, or by heathens who still adhered to the idols worshipped by their fathers. Hence the constant injunction, *See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.* Despised, detested, or persecuted by others, see that ye love one another, and let no envious, no jealous, no angry feelings disturb the sincerity or chill the fervency of your affection. For to this ye were called; and this is the proof that ye have been called effectually, and have “not received the grace of God in vain,” that ye *have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren.* Where the soul is not purified, this love is wanting, or is frequently disturbed. Pride, envy, covetousness, engender wrath, emulation, strife. But when the truth as it is in Jesus is obeyed, the Spirit cleanses the soul from those evil dispositions, through which men hate one another instead of loving one another.

When this same apostle who writes these words asked of our Lord, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Until seven times?—the question showed that some natural passions still lurked within, waiting for an opportunity to break forth.¹ And when the Lord replied, I say not unto thee, until seven times—but until seventy times seven; he instructed him to purify his soul unto a more loving and forgiving temper, through the Spirit working with him.

No doubt, this is a new nature, very unlike the original character of the heart. But they are re-

¹ Matt. xviii, 21.

minded, that as Christians, they *have* a new nature: and on this very ground he addressed them, and expects this of them.

23. *Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

The Lord Jesus had declared, that “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”² And now St. Peter says, that these had been *born again*. The authors of their first being were *corruptible*; liable to death, and sure to perish; the author of their second being was *incorruptible*, eternal, even *the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever*.

But how do we read, that *the word of God* is the author of this new birth? How often is the word of God both read and heard, and no such result follows? The heart remains what it was before. The word of God is the instrument which the Spirit uses and makes effectual. The word of God is the outward cause; the Spirit of God the inward agent. Multitudes heard the word spoken, or read it written, and remained unchanged; it was seed falling upon parched and unbroken ground, and never penetrated the soil. But when the Spirit opened the way, and prepared the heart to receive the word, there it lodged; and there it sprang up, and there it produced the plant which brings forth christian fruit of every kind; and among the first of its fruits, love, and all that leads to love among mankind; meek-

² So James i. 18. Of his own will *begat he us by the word of truth*, that we might be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

ness, patience, long-suffering, brotherly kindness, charity. The case of Lydia furnishes an example, as related Acts xvi. "We sat down and spake unto the women who resorted to a place by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made. And a certain woman named Lydia heard us, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto those things which were spoke of Paul." Thus was she *born again of the word of God*, declared by the mouth of Paul. And immediately the result appeared: her heart was filled with *unfeigned love of the brethren*. "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."

Peter cannot mention the incorruptible seed, the word of God, without remarking the contrast between it and earthly things.

24. *For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.*

25. *But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word, which by the gospel is preached unto you.*

What has its beginning in mortal man partakes of the perishable nature of its author. Such is the natural man. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, "and *all flesh is grass.*" The *word of the Lord* has an immortal origin: and one born of it partakes of the same immortality: does not wither as *the grass withereth, and the flower whereof falleth away*: but, like the truth which the

word contains, “springeth up unto everlasting life.” This word was *preached unto them by the Gospel*: and offered glory, and honour, and immortality to all its faithful followers. For though “the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”^s

LECTURE XXVIII.

CHRIST THE CORNER STONE OF A TEMPLE RAISED TO GOD.

1 Peter ii. 1—6.

1. *Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,*
2. *As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.*
3. *If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

The apostle speaks to them as *new-born babes*; “born again,” as he had just before observed, “by the word of God.” After birth we look for growth, and growth is promoted by salutary food. At the same time anything must be avoided which would disturb health and prevent growth. For this St. Peter makes provision. *If*, he says, *ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious*; if you have enjoyed a sense of his mercy, and above all things would dread to lose his favour, clear your hearts of the

^s 1 John ii. 17.

evil which is hateful to him, and seek the means of that good which he approves. *Lay aside all malice.* St. Paul, in his letter to Titus, (iii. 3,) when he calls to mind his early life, makes mention of *malice and envies* as among the evil dispositions which had beset him: "We ourselves," he says, "were once—hateful, and hating one another." There can be no healthy growth in grace, when such tempers are allowed. *Wherefore, laying aside all these,* as unsuited to the new nature forming in you, seek the nourishment which will sustain and strengthen that nature: as having come to a new existence, desire the food proper to it: desire *the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.* "Born again of the word of God," draw your nourishment from the same word. That which began the work, is also the proper instrument to complete it. "For the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, converting the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."¹ When this word is read, marked, learnt, and inwardly digested, the evil tendencies of the natural heart are gradually corrected, and the mind is brought to agree with what God, the author of "the word," approves. And there is none of that fear, in the apostle, which men have sometimes entertained, lest that word which God designs for our nourishment, should prove dangerous or hurtful.² He

¹ Psa. xix. 7, 8.

² The Romish church, which professes to derive so much of its authority from St. Peter, did not learn from him to restrain or forbid the reading of the Scriptures.

makes no exception, and he requires no addition. *Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby*: desire that word, which, unmixed and unadulterated, is as salutary to the soul of man, as milk to the tender body.

The desire for this nourishment will come from experience of its excellence, and of the excellence of Him from whom it proceeds. It will be a very strong desire in those who *who have tasted that the Lord is gracious*.

In that word of God, among other examples of what the Lord should be to his people, Isaiah speaks of him under the image of a Stone, a corner-stone, which should be laid in Jerusalem, and afford a sure defence to all who rested on it.

4. *To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,*

5. *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

6. *Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.*

So had Isaiah foretold, (xxviii. 18,) “ Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I lay in Sion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste,” or be in confusion.

³ As St. Paul, Ephes. xi. 21. “ All the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

God had now fulfilled his design, and fixed this Stone in the place appointed for it: *a living stone*; having life, and communicating life: *disallowed indeed of men*, as possessing no value, no beauty that it should be desired, but *chosen of God, and precious*.

The prophet had added, *He that believeth*, he that relies on this stone, *shall not be confounded*. It was an encouragement to the Christians to whom Peter was writing. They were believing in the Saviour whom the prophecy prefigured; they had been brought to rest on Him, that they might inherit the promise, and secure for themselves a firm support, a sure foundation against the time to come. It was a comfort for them to know, that *whoever believeth on him shall not be confounded*.

And now it occurs to the apostle, that as the Lord Jesus was the corner-stone of the building, the Christians themselves were a part of that building which rested on Him as its corner-stone. The whole formed the church of God: of which every member is *a lively* (a living) *stone*, by the union of which *the spiritual house* is constituted; being at the same time, collectively, the temple dedicated to God's honour and service, and also, individually, *a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*.

The purpose of a temple is the worship of God. The worship of God among the Jews had been by sacrifice. And now this holy *priesthood* was to *offer up sacrifice*; not indeed the "blood of bulls and of goats," as in former time, "the shadow of things to come;" but the sacrifice of praise and thanks-

giving : the sacrifice of good and charitable works ; for with such God is well pleased :”⁴ even to offer themselves a “living sacrifice,” holy, *acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*⁵ Through him the Father accepts these *spiritual sacrifices*, as designed and intended to his honour, and completing the purpose for which *he laid in Sion a chief corner-stone.*

The idea represented to our minds in this passage is very beautiful. Every christian community is a temple raised to the glory of God : and every individual Christian a priest in that temple.

Such, for example, was the first christian assembly of which we read, meeting in an upper chamber, (Acts i. 13,) when the apostles were collected together “with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren, who continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.” These constituted a *spiritual house*. They were to the Jews around them what the tabernacle of God had been in the wilderness, and the temple at Jerusalem. This company was a witness to the world that God had visited his people, and revealed his glory. And this *spiritual house* consisted of a *holy priesthood* ; they were devoted to God’s service as a priesthood is ; and every word they spoke, every deed they performed in his name, was a *spiritual sacrifice*.

Every community of Christians, large or small, however divided or subdivided, should present a like example. Every parish should be a temple of God. Every household or family a temple of God : and all the members of each should bear in mind the honour to which he is called, and the duty

⁴ Heb. xiii. 16.

⁵ See Rom. xii. 1.

which he is bound to discharge. He is one set apart through Christ Jesus, and dedicated, as the sons of Levi were of old, that “whatever he does, he should do all to the glory of God.”⁶

LECTURE XXIX.

THE HIGH CALLING OF CHRISTIANS.

PETER ii. 7—10.

7. *Unto you, therefore, which believe, he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.*

8. *And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed.*

The apostle here carries on his allusion to the prophecy which described Jesus as a stone, a chief corner-stone, to be laid in Zion for the security of his people. That prophecy, he says, is accomplished. *The stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.*¹ Him whom the Jews rejected, “has God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour.” But the same rock which is a sure support to them who rest upon it, may also prove fatal to those who fall or rush against it. And

⁶ 1 Cor. xii. 31.

¹ Ps. cxviii. 22. Acts iv. 11.

so the same Jesus, who is precious unto all that believe, is *a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to them that stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.* For he who has ordained that all who come to him through Christ Jesus shall attain salvation, has also “appointed unto wrath” the disobedient, who will not be persuaded to accept the offer of his mercy. As the Lord himself said, “They that fall against this stone shall be broken:”² they, that is, who stumble and take cause of offence at the word, which, while it assures them of God’s mercy, assures them likewise that the gate of mercy is narrow, and that Christ is the only door through which there is access to the kingdom of heaven. There are still too many such. Whilst, again, there are others who in their feelings explain and justify the apostle’s expression; *Unto you that believe he is precious.* It is He, they say, who came “as a light into the world:” and but for him, we should have remained for ever in darkness. It is He, they say, who taught us the value of the soul; and made us understand that “one thing is needful.” Perhaps, though dedicated to him in baptism, though instructed in the way of godliness, they have been some time led astray into the paths of sin and Satan. Then how precious to them is He who has reclaimed their wandering souls, and snatched them from the gulf of perdition! It is He, they say, who is our “advocate with the Father,” corrupt and unworthy as we were; and his “blood cleanseth from all sin.” It is He who enables us to “overcome the

² Matt. xxi. 44.

world," and is treading down Satan under our feet: it is He who is creating us anew after the image of God: gives a humble disposition, instead of a proud and haughty spirit: a charitable tenderness, instead of unfeeling coldness: a desire after holiness, instead of a love of earthly things. In short, He is "the Christ, the Son of the living God," who came down from the bosom of the Father, that he "might give his life a ransom for many:" a ransom for us, for ourselves. It is this personal sense of salvation through Christ, which makes him *precious to them that believe.*

They who thus receive the Lord Jesus, and so answer the purpose of God who sent him, are raised to a dignity which exalts them above their fellow men.

9. *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*

10. *Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

That which Hosea had foretold had come to pass. God had said by the mouth of that prophet, (xi. 23,) "I will have mercy upon him that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them that were not my people, Thou art my people: and they shall say, Thou art my God." This was now explained and fulfilled. Nations who had obtained no share in God's mercy had now obtained it, and his invita-

tion had been issued to them that “ were afar off, and to them that were nigh.” To the Gentiles who were afar off the word had gone, commanding all men everywhere to “ repent and believe the Gospel:” and to the Jews who were nigh a light had sprung up, showing that they had been lying in darkness, though priding themselves as the people of God. And now forming one body through the adoption that is in Christ Jesus, they were honoured by the highest titles. They were *a chosen generation*: selected from the mass of mankind as a favoured race. They were a *royal priesthood*: established to praise, and worship, and serve the King of heaven. They were a *holy nation*: sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, and instructed by his word: they were a *peculiar people*: God’s own people; not only his by creation, as the Father of all mankind, but his by covenant, as purchased by the blood of his dear Son. This the Jews were first designed to be: and this they proved, as far as they were faithful, from the time when God set them apart from other nations, to maintain in the world the knowledge and service of the Creator. He had said to them, when he brought them out of Egypt, (Ex. xix. 5,) “ Now if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure to me above all people; for all the earth is mine; and you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.” What the Jews had been, during the time of ignorance when darkness covered the earth, that Christians were now to be, since the light of the Gospel had risen in the world. To this end were they chosen, that they *should show forth*

the praises of him who had called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.

And there is much in the phrases introduced here by St. Peter, both to instruct us in the course we should take, and excite us to pursue it. I am one, should each Christian say, of *a chosen generation*. Multitudes are without God in the world. I am selected from that multitude to “know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.”³ Light has thus come unto me. May it be for my salvation, and not for my greater condemnation! I am one of *a royal priesthood*. Am I then living as one set apart to God’s service, and consecrated by his Spirit, that I may offer to him those “spiritual sacrifices” with which he is well pleased? I am one of *a holy nation*. Does my character agree with my vocation? And am I following after holiness, as “He who hath called me is holy?” I am one of *a peculiar people*. Can God esteem me as such, and acknowledge me as his, “in that day when he makes up his jewels?”⁴

Such thoughts should stimulate the Christian, that his conduct may correspond with the honourable title which he bears. In vain is he called one of God’s people, if he walks as “the children of this world:” in vain has he obtained mercy, unless he says unto Him who has shown him mercy, “Thou art my God.”

³ See John iii. 19; and xv. 22.

⁴ Mal. iii 17.

LECTURE XXX.

CHRISTIANS EXHORTED TO A HOLY, PEACE-
ABLE, HUMBLE CONVERSATION.

1 PETER ii. 11—17.

11. *Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul ;*

12. *Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles : that whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

Mention of the dignity and privilege of Christians always leads the apostles on to the mention of their duty. If they were *a chosen nation, a peculiar people*, “ what manner of men ought they to be in all holy conversation and godliness ?” If they had obtained a place in “ a better country, that is, a heavenly ;” how ought they to pass through this world *as strangers and pilgrims*, not as those who were to settle down in it as their home ? *I beseech you* not to indulge, but to *abstain from fleshly lusts*, bodily appetites, by which the soul is continually assaulted and endangered, *which war against the soul*. Such is the phrase. They carry on an habitual warfare against the soul.¹ The word is very significant. Like determined, persevering enemies,

¹ *στρατευόμενοι.*

these desires are not easily subdued : require constant watchfulness : are always at hand to take advantage, if the soldier is ever absent from his post. Sometimes you believe that they have been vanquished : when suddenly they appear again in some unexpected quarter, and give fresh molestation. If there is a weak part in the heart—and what heart has not “ its own plague,” its besetting sin ?—against that weak part they will use their utmost efforts, that through it they may obtain complete possession. And their object is destruction : as of those who maintain a warfare. Satan will use them, if he can, to destroy the soul. As Paul was well aware, when he tells us, (1 Cor. ix. 27,) “ I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway.” In this case, as in other warfare, there is often most danger when there is least fear. He that is forewarned, is fore-armed. But in one respect warfare against spiritual dangers differs from warfare against common enemies. There confidence prevails. In the case of the soul, our strength is to feel our weakness : and to pray with David, (Ps. xxxv. 1,) “ Plead thou my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me ; and fight thou against them that fight against me.”

It was enough to confirm their resolution, that their own salvation was at stake ; but there was another motive too : the unconverted Gentiles around them were always ready to *spea*k *against* *them as evil doers* : and must *behold their good works,*

witness a course of conduct very different from their own, that they too *might glorify God in the day of visitation*. The grace which had visited others might also descend upon them : and the holy lives of the Christians might, as it were, prepare the way, that they might “ know the time of their visitation,”² and not like the Jewish people, who knew it not, “ receive the grace of God in vain.”

One part of the good life which should distinguish them, must be quietness, and submission to the laws.

13. *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake ; whether it be to the king, as supreme,*

14. *Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.*

The intention of government is to correct evil doing, and to encourage what is good. It is the Lord's will that obedience be paid to governors. For they are his ordinance ; arise out of the providential plan by which he rules the world. Men, indeed, appoint the governors ; and therefore they are here termed *the ordinance of man* :³ a human creation. But they are also God's ordinance : because he has so ordained the affairs of the world, that men find it needful for their own welfare to appoint such powers. No positive command from him is required. Matters are so ordered, that men do of their own accord what he sees fit should be done.

² Luke xix. 44.

³ ἀνθρωπινη κτισις.

To these ruling powers as established in a land, it is the will of God that Christians should be obedient.

15. *For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men ;*

16. *As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.*

They were *free*, it was true : they had a promise of freedom. “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall *make you free*.” (John viii 32.) But this did not imply freedom from human laws or national government. They *must not use their liberty for a cloke of maliciousness* : they must not say, We are servants of God, accountable to him alone, and do not acknowledge human authority. On the contrary, they must be more quiet than others ; more submissive to the laws ; more averse to “meddle with them that are given to change.” For they had a double reason. Others might be restrained by fear of consequences : they would so act *for the Lord’s sake ; that with well doing they might put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*.⁴ Such ignorance was manifest in the complaint of the Jews against Paul, as preferred by their orator Tertullus : (Acts xxiv. 5 :) “We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, who also hath gone about to profane the temple. And that ignorance was *put to silence*, when Paul was able to say in answer, “They neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the

⁴ See the very similar passage, Rom. xiii. 1—10.

synagogues, nor in the city : neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me." So that when he was openly accused and examined, nothing could be objected against him ; and in the end the judge was bound to declare, " This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds." ⁵

One comprehensive precept describes the whole duty of man in this matter.

17. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

Respect is due to *all men* : for " God made man in his own image." Love is due to *the brotherhood* : for they are joined in the bond of covenant with the same Redeemer. Fear is due to *God*. For he is in heaven, and we his creatures are upon earth : and the fear of the Creator is the wisdom of the creature. Honour is due to *the king, as supreme* ; " not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." " Render therefore unto all their due : render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's ; and unto God the things that are God's."

⁵ Acts xxvi. 31.

LECTURE XXXI.

CHRISTIANS EXHORTED TO PATIENCE AND
FORBEARANCE.

1 PETER ii. 18—25.

18. *Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.*

19. *For this is thank-worthy, if a man, for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully.*

20. *For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.*

The inhabitants of a land must submit themselves to the governors of the land. This the apostle had declared in what went before. And so the members of a family must be subject to the master of the family: and that, even when human infirmity makes it difficult to yield: *not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.* They might meet with harsh and unjust treatment. If they followed the scriptural rule, “Being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat:” if “in well-doing they possessed their souls in patience:” *this is acceptable with God.* This is the conduct he approves; because it is not the natural inclination of the heart to *suffer wrongfully and take it patiently*; but the

conquest over nature : it is the effect and proof of principle ; of the principle arising out of christian faith.

21. *For even hereunto were ye called ; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.*

So that the patient endurance of wrongs, such wrongs as may encounter us in life, is a part of the faith we profess. *For even hereunto were ye called.* Ye were called to bear Christ's yoke : to make him your example : to *follow his steps* : and this is his example, for *conscience toward God to endure grief, suffering wrongfully.* You suffer. So did Christ. Look and see if there be any sorrow like unto his sorrow. Which of his disciples has ever been called to taste a cup so full of bitterness? You suffer, *though you do well.* So did Christ. He suffered, "the just for the unjust," though even his enemies and his murderers could "find no fault in him." You suffer for righteousness sake. So too did Christ : who asked of his opposers, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"¹ and whom the world hated, "because he testified of it, that the works thereof are evil."

22. *Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:*

23. *Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not ; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously :*

24. *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness : by whose stripes ye were healed.*

¹ John viii. 46 ; vii. 7.

To bring us to that righteousness of which patience is a part, was a main object of the death of Jesus on the cross. *He bare our sins in his own body, that we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness.* “He suffered for sin, that he might bring us to God.”

And there is a close and intelligible connexion between our becoming *dead to sin*, and the dying of Christ *for sin*. That death shows us what sin is, in God’s sight: shows us its heinousness, and its awful consequences, in a light too clear to be mistaken. The mode of suffering, the cross, was chosen for this very purpose: though not a Jewish punishment, nor one to which a Roman citizen could be condemned. Yet this was the punishment which he chose to bear, that we might more effectually become *dead to sin*: that sin might lose that power over us, which it exercises over our original nature, and which only some counteracting force can restrain.

Naturally, we are alive to sin; as a limb in its ordinary state is alive to pain. But a limb may become callous; so that fire, which would otherwise scorch and injure, may be touched without harm by the callous hand.

In the same manner the heart may become dead to sin. Temptation may be applied to it, but does not prevail. Simon Magus offered money to Peter, which he could not lawfully accept.² One who was alive to covetousness, might have yielded to the trial. Peter was dead to any such sin; and the temptation had

² Acts viii.

no more effect upon him, than a blow would have upon a lifeless body. It is a similar deadness to all sin, which the death of Christ for sin is intended to produce, and will produce if rightly apprehended. Place the most desirable object before a man on the one side, and on the other a burning fire; telling him, that if he seize the tempting object, he must suffer in that fire; the man is dead to the temptation: it has no more effect upon him than if he were dead: all the desire which he otherwise might yield to, is paralyzed within him. Similar is the influence of the cross of Christ. Whilst we contemplate sin on the one hand, and it allures; on the other we behold the cross, and it deters.

Deters from sin. But the effect does not stop here, or the purpose of God would not be answered: the purpose, *that we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness*. Peter dissuades the Christians from impatience and revenge and murmuring, because these would be sin, and they ought to be dead to sin. They ought to be insensible to those emotions which are contrary to the will of God respecting us. But they ought not to be insensible altogether. Though not affected by sinful feeling, they should not be without feeling, but alive unto righteousness in all its parts and branches; and therefore, among them, to patience, and contentment, and forgiveness of wrongs. They must show such a spirit as he showed, *who when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, he threatened not; who, even from the tree on which he bare our sins, breathed out a prayer for those who had caused his*

death: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."³

To Him these had come as their example: and such was the example which he gave. Into his fold they had entered: were numbered among his flock, that they might no longer wander in ignorance of the way, or wantonly turn aside from the way which they knew.

25. For ye were as sheep going astray: but are now returned unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls.

In your former ignorance, ye might have indulged in that anger, malice, or revenge, which is natural to man when left to himself, and going astray like sheep which have no shepherd. But you have been recalled to the state from which Adam turned aside: have been brought back unto him, who, like a bishop or overseer, leads and guides the flock: and therefore you must "hear his voice, and follow him."

You must follow him, when he leads the way to patience under wrongs, to forgiveness of injuries. You must hear his voice, when he says: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."⁴

³ Luke xxiii. 32.

⁴ Matt. v. 44.

LECTURE XXXII.

THE DUTIES OF WIVES AND HUSBANDS.

1 PETER iii. 1—7.

1. *Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives,*

2. *While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.*

Subordination, mutual submission, is the law of the world. Therefore, St. Peter having spoken of the obedience due to magistrates and due to masters, proceeds to say, *Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands.* So it was ordained from the beginning; when God said to the woman, “Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.”¹ But an encouragement is here added. It might often happen that a woman should be converted to the christian faith, whilst her husband *obeyed not, believed not, the word.* He does not suppose that a christian woman would marry one who remained a heathen; but the cases would be frequent when after marriage one party was converted, and not the other. St. Paul provides for it. (1 Cor. vii. 12.) “If any brother hath a wife that

¹ Gen. iii. 16.

believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband which believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him." One only thought would be in the mind of the christian wife, how she might bring her husband to hopes and prospects like her own. "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?"²

There are two modes of preaching, by the lips, and by the life. The silent persuasion of the life may often accomplish what never could be effected by words. The husband might perceive a change of tastes and inclinations: the vanities of the world no longer influencing the heart; domestic duties more carefully and cheerfully performed; the temper regulated by meekness and charity; all the signs of a *chaste conversation coupled with fear*; the whole deportment respectful and submissive. Thus he might be led to reflect on the cause of such change, and *without the word* preached, be *won by the conversation of the wife* to open his heart to the Spirit of God, and seek the same Lord, the same faith, the same baptism in which she had found shelter "from the wrath to come."

But this must depend upon a wise and consistent behaviour. The bent of the heart must be manifested in all things. The personal appearance must correspond with the profession.

3. *Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning,*

² 1 Cor. vii. 16.

of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel ;

4. *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.*

There was nothing contrary to that spirit in Rebecca, wife of Isaac, nor anything deserving blame in what was done by Eliezer, (Gen. xxiv. 22,) when, after conversing with Rebecca, and having reason to believe that she had been providentially made known to him as the destined wife of Isaac, "he took a golden ear-ring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold," and placed them in her hands. There may be these tokens of affection, and these signs of rank and situation, and the heart may regard them as such, and nothing more. The *adorning* in St. Peter's mind is rather that which was assumed by Jezebel, Ahab's queen, when Jehu came to Jezreel as the instrument of God's vengeance against her wickedness and idolatry. Thinking, perhaps, to entrap Jehu, we are told that at his approach she "painted her face and tired her head, and looked out at a window."³ This was *that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, and of putting on of apparel*, which the apostle forbids. It is not thus that love is to be sought, or affection retained. These ornaments savour of "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," and are "not of the Father, but of the world." Let the first ambi-

³ 2 Kings ix. 30.

tion be, to please God : and there is an ornament which is in *his sight of great price, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit* : not of silver and gold, which is *corruptible*, soon lost and easily tarnished ; but a renewed heart, “ first pure, then peaceable : ” acceptable to God, and approved of men.

Of this spirit Scripture furnished them with excellent examples.

5. *For after this manner, in the old time, the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands ;*

6. *Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord : whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.*

Many of those to whom this letter would come, were not *daughters of Abraham* according to the flesh, but of Gentile birth. And yet high honour was attached to the children of Abraham. It was much to say that they “ they had Abraham to their father.” This then they had attained, through the adoption in Christ Jesus. God had raised up in every country “ children unto Abraham,” in those whose heart and practice were like Abraham’s : as long as they *did well*, and whilst under proper *subjection to their own husbands*, still were not *afraid with any amazement* : were not so submissive to him, as to fear him more than God, or obey him when God ought rather to be obeyed.

If modesty and humility were the duty of the wife ; so a corresponding duty was required of the husband.

7. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life ; that your prayers be not hindered.

Every relation of life, more especially that sacred and most important relation which is formed by marriage, should be hallowed by prayer. The apostle does not stop to command this, but takes it for granted : and forbids the things which might render prayer less regular or fervent : *that your prayers be not hindered*. For prayers would be hindered, on the one side, by the want of a meek and quiet spirit ; and on the other, by the failure of that respect and consideration which is due to the wife, as *to the weaker vessel*, the one on whom the heavier burthen of domestic life devolves.

Towards all with whom he has concern, courtesy, kindness, meekness, and forbearance, are to mark the character of the Christian. But most of all are they required in that sacred connexion which God appointed from the first, when he determined that it was “ not good for man to be alone ;” but ordained that “ a man should leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and they twain should be one flesh.”⁴ And the apostle urges the strongest motive for hallowing this union, when he says, *that ye may be heirs together of the grace of*

⁴ Gen. ii. 18. Matt. xix. 5.

life: that the union may be not temporal, but eternal: and being adorned by a christian spirit, and cemented by purity and prayer, may be renewed and perpetuated in the kingdom of God. Here, in this uncertain world, it must be ruffled by cares and anxieties; and here it may be interrupted—we know not how soon—and broken: but there it will be perfect, and lasting: free from alloy, and secure from interruption.

“Wherefore let every man see that he so love his wife, even as himself: and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”⁵

LECTURE XXXIII.

CHRISTIANS EXHORTED TO PATIENCE UNDER INJURIES, AND MEEKNESS UNDER PROVOCATIONS.

1 PETER iii. 8—16.

8. *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:*

9. *Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing: knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.*

To this *are ye called*: for this purpose are ye selected and “made to differ” from others to whom the tidings of the Gospel have not been revealed,

⁵ Eph. v. 33.

that "ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you," and so inherit an eternal blessing. That blessing which is pronounced upon "the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." That blessing which is pronounced upon "the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." That blessing which is pronounced upon "the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." That blessing which is promised to those who are patient under injuries and persecution, according to the precept given them; "Love your enemies, bless them which curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."¹

Nor was this any new commandment. It had been neglected in the practice, even of those who knew the will of God: but it was required in the Scripture from the beginning. God had always promised his blessing to those who thus rule their lives. The Psalmist had said, (Psa. xxxiv. 12.)

10. *For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.*

11. *Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.*

12. *For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*

13. *And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?*

¹ Matt. v. 44.

Such is the providence of God. He favours *the pitiful, the courteous*, the lover of peace, the man who takes heed to his words, “that he offend not with his tongue.” The world is so ordered, that *the followers of that which is good* have their reward. The Lord watches over them, and “makes even their enemies to be at peace with them.” The world, with all its faults, does not commonly assail the just, the sober-minded, the charitable, the peace-maker. Or if it should be unfavourably disposed towards them, it cannot *harm them* with any real or important injury: they may have to bear a few harsh words, or uncandid suspicions: but it is not often in men’s power, even if it is their will, to inflict on the *followers of good* any serious harm.

Such is the general rule. But there are exceptions. There have been times, and in the early days of the Gospel those times were frequent, when goodness, meekness, charity, would not profit men, or secure them against heavy persecution. The apostle proceeds to fortify their minds, and prepare them for trials.

14. *But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;*

15. *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear:*

16. *Having a good conscience; that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.*

Such was the counsel given them, if they met with ill treatment and opposition. First to arm themselves with a thought which shall overcome all inferior thoughts. In the words of Isaiah, (viii. 12.) *Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.* Fill your minds with such a sense of the majesty of God, as may enable you to reverence him first, and preserve you from being troubled with the fear of man.

Next be ready to *give an answer*, when asked, concerning *the reason of your hope*. The heathen religion would bear no inquiry. No ground could be shown, why men should worship the work of their own hands; or reverence as gods, those who were described as having like passions with themselves. But the Christian had reason on his side: had *an answer to give to every man that asked him*, Why do you separate from our company, and join not with us "in the same excess of riot?" "Our conversation is in heaven," he would reply, "from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," that "when he shall appear, we also may appear with him in glory."

What reason have you to look for him? He was foretold from the beginning of the world, and devout men were expecting him on earth, when he was born in Bethlehem of Judea, and the messenger announced him, proclaiming, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." As he then appeared, and fulfilled all that was written in Scripture concerning himself; so we believe that he will appear again a second time, and receive his followers into his everlasting kingdom.

How shall he save others, who could not deliver himself from a vile and disgraceful death? Because, even at the time when he laid down his life, he gave proof that he laid it down of himself, and no man took it from him: and when he rose again from the dead, he sealed the truth of his words, and has given assurance unto all men that they too shall rise and stand in the presence of God.

“And we are witnesses of these things.” We his apostles who instructed you, have taught you what “our eyes have seen, and our ears heard, and our hands handled of the word of life.” You have not, therefore, followed idle tales, or vain traditions: you have *a reason of the hope that is in you*: and this reason be always ready to declare, with openness and confidence, but still in that spirit which suits a good and sacred cause; *with meekness and fear*; with humility and reverence. “For the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men.”²

And above all, *having a good conscience*. This would be the best reason, the most convincing argument, both to themselves and others: that whereas they had been, like the rest of mankind, lovers of this world, “serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another,”³ — now they had “put off all these,” and were walking before God righteously, soberly, and godly: so that none could *accuse their good conversation in Christ*: and “they of the contrary part might be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of them.”⁴

² 2 Tim. ii. 24.³ Tit. iii. 3.⁴ Ib. ii. 8.

At all times it is needful to *sanctify the Lord God in our hearts*. At all times it is needful to have a *reason of the hope that is in us*. And at all times the best reason will be, the answer of a *good conscience*. If any are unhappily disposed to doubt, whether Christ Jesus be to them that believe “the wisdom of God and the power of God,” the best reply is to show them the proof of that wisdom and power in converting the hearts of his disciples. There is much which may be displayed and witnessed, to testify the reality of that power:—self-denying faith, enlivening hope, universal charity, unwearied patience:—and we may safely ask how these can be produced, except by the Spirit of God: but there is still more which cannot be openly disclosed, the inward peace which keeps the heart, the good conscience which no suspicion, no misrepresentation, no false accusation can disturb. This is that peace “which passeth all understanding,” when “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”⁵

⁵ Rom. viii. 16.

LECTURE XXXIV.

SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST JESUS COMPARED
TO THE DELIVERANCE OF NOAH.

1 PETER iii. 17—22.

17. *For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing.*

18. *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit :*

We trace here the course of the apostle's mind. He had been stating what is true in ordinary times and cases, that honest and proper conduct would preserve them free from injury. "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" But it might prove otherwise. It had proved otherwise with many of their fellow Christians. When "Saul made havoc of the church, and haling men and women cast them into prison;" these certainly did not suffer *for evil doing*. They were followers of that which is good, and yet they suffered. Here then St. Peter suggests a reflection which belongs peculiarly to the Gospel. They had a thought to alleviate their trials, which has afforded consolation to many a Christian in his distress. He is afflicted. It is no unknown thing in the christian history. The author of his faith was afflicted: "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Farther; his trials spring out of his faith: *his good conversa-*

tion in Christ is falsely accused : his zeal for God is treated as an offence against man : he is blamed and suffers without cause. But so likewise his Lord and Saviour suffered without cause : he *suffered for sins* not his own, for he “ was without spot of sin ;” *he suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.*

Here, then, is a reason why the Christian may possess his soul in patience, and think it not strange, as if some unheard of thing had happened to him ; for, in truth, it is the nature of christian faith to suffer here for righteousness' sake, looking for “ a great reward in heaven.” And so suffering, he is conformed to his Lord and Master, “ who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God.” There he “ ever liveth,” fulfilling the purpose of his death, *that he might bring us to God* : that he might give access to all who come to God by him. So that whilst we make mention of his death, we must at the same time remember that he rose again, *being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.* In his human nature, that which he had derived from Mary, when he “ was made flesh,” in that he died. But it was not possible that he should be holden of death. Though he *was put to death in the flesh, he was quickened by the Spirit,*

19. *By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison ;*

20. *Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water.*

The same Spirit by which Christ *was quickened*, whilst his human body died, was the Spirit which preached to the inhabitants of the world before the flood ; those who were then *disobedient*, unbelieving, and were now in the *prison* of Hades, the place of departed souls, awaiting the resurrection of the great day. To these, says St. Peter, Christ *went and preached*.¹ “He was in the world, though the world knew him not.” It was his Spirit by which Noah, “the preacher of righteousness,” was animated, when he called his contemporaries to repentance, and assured them of the coming deluge. *The long-suffering of God*, “not willing that any should perish,” *waited whilst the ark was preparing*, and Noah, by deeds as well as words, was warning the people around him. But how few were they who hearkened to this warning, and were converted by this Spirit ! Only Noah and his family entered into the ark ; *wherein few, that is eight souls, were saved by water*. “The ark moved upon the face of the waters,” and preserved those who had committed themselves to it for safety.

21. *The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ :*

22. *Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God ; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.*

Noah was delivered by the ark which sailed over the waters. His preservation may be compared with that of the believers in Christ : for they too are

¹ παρευθεις ἐκηρυξεν.

saved by water in baptism: and the deliverance of Noah from the deluge is a type of the believer's deliverance. Strictly speaking, indeed, Noah was not *saved by water*, but by the ark: and strictly speaking, the Christian is not saved by baptism, but by the true ark, Christ Jesus, into which he enters by the ordinance of baptism. But St. Peter had been alluding to Noah and his faith, and to the contemporaries of Noah and their disobedience. And this leads him to notice the resemblance between the salvation offered through Christ Jesus, and which those enjoyed who had been baptized in his name,—and the deliverance which God provided for Noah in the ark, and which he secured for himself by entering in. *The like figure whereunto even baptism doth now also save us.*

But whilst he is writing these words, St. Peter calls to mind the mistake which is so likely to prevail, as if the ordinance itself possessed the saving power. *Baptism*, he says, *doth save us*. But let none suppose I mean the outward rite: *baptism doth save us: not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God*: the sincere movement of the heart to accept the gracious offers of the Gospel. Baptism, as he began by saying, is a type or *figure*. It is a figure of the cleansing of the heart from sin. As the body needs to be purified from the defilement it contracts; so the soul needs to be purified from the corruption which belongs to it. As water cleanses the body, so the Spirit of God in Christ Jesus cleanses the heart. And the rite of baptism is the emblem of this spiritual purification.

Accordingly, the command was given to Saul (Acts xxii. 16,) on his conversion to the faith of Christ, "Arise, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord." But had the heart of Saul been like the heart of Simon Magus, when he was baptized in the name of the Lord a few months before, baptism would have washed away no sin. There would have been *the putting away the filth of the flesh*, but not *the answer of a good conscience toward God*. Simon had "no part nor lot in the matter," as Peter himself assured him, because no real faith, no hearty repentance, led him to be baptized: no such feelings as supply *the answer of a good conscience*. For then the thoughts of the disciple are on this wise: "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." But thou, Lord, hast laid on one the iniquity of us all, and hast declared that whosoever believeth on Him shall not come into condemnation: that "whosoever believeth and is baptized shall be saved." I believe; and therefore I desire to be baptized. I desire to leave my corrupt nature in the water which cleanseth me, and to receive through the Spirit a new and purer nature, created in righteousness and true holiness.

Such is the answer of the conscience towards God, which renders baptism a lively ordinance, and not a dead and useless form. Such is the meaning of those promises which when infants are baptized are given for them by their sureties: and which, when they come to age, they take upon themselves. And having thus entered into the ark, they enjoy that deliverance of which the deliverance of Noah

affords a striking emblem: they pass through the grave to a joyful resurrection, assured to them *by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.*

LECTURE XXXV.

THE OBLIGATION OF CHRISTIANS TO A LIFE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

1 PETER iv. 1—6.

1. *Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;*
2. *That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.*

These words exhort us to use the example of what Christ hath done and suffered for our sakes, as a motive why we should *cease from sin*. *Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh*: taking upon him our nature, and becoming man, he submitted to death, even the death of the cross. This, from the beginning to the end, was *suffering*: enduring what was contrary to present desires and present happiness. It was *suffering*, when he who was God, in glory and majesty inconceivable, took upon him the weakness and pains of our mortal state. It was

suffering, when He who had dwelt with angels, and was all holiness and excellence, came down to dwell among wicked men : to see their folly, to be witness of their depravity, even to feel its effects in their scorn and hatred. It is painful even to the virtuous among men to be cast into the society of the vicious and abandoned : what *suffering* then must it have cost our blessed Lord, to be opposed by the enmity of the Sadducees, to encounter the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, and to sit at meat among publicans and sinners ! And surely it was *suffering*, when he underwent the penalty of sin upon the cross. He knew beforehand that it would be so ; for he prayed that, if it were possible, the bitter cup might pass from him ; and he did not conceal that it was : for in the depth of his agony he exclaimed, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ”

Forasmuch then, says the apostle, *as Christ hath suffered in the flesh for you, arm yourselves with the same mind.* Be likewise disposed to mortify your flesh, with the corrupt affections and lusts. His suffering in the flesh, was bearing your nature and infirmities : your suffering in the flesh, is crucifying the whole body of sin : his suffering, was dying *for* sin : your suffering, is dying *to* sin, and so *ceasing from it* : denying yourselves those pleasures, those compliances with our evil nature, which draw down the anger of God upon “ the children of disobedience.” The apostle seems to allow, that this is, in some sense, *suffering*. And all the phrases under which the *ceasing from sin* is spoken of, admit the same. In one place it is *crucifying* ; crucifying the world, crucifying the flesh ; killing as it were by a

slow and torturing death. In another place it is *mortifying*: wounding so as gradually to destroy. In another it is *denying* ourselves; refraining from what it is pleasant to enjoy. In another, it is *taking up our cross*: bearing what is most distressing to bear. And our Lord himself intimates that to part with a favourite sin may be as painful as to pluck out a right eye, may require as much resolution as the cutting off a right arm.¹

It is sad proof of our corrupt nature, that to *cease from sin* should be thus difficult, thus painful: that to follow the commands and fulfil the will of God should not be delighting ourselves, but *suffering in the flesh!*

This, however, only makes it more needful. For whilst our nature is contrary to the nature of God, it must be incapable of enjoying his presence in heaven. Therefore, we are taught here, to *arm ourselves*,² as people do for a conflict in which they must conquer or die: to arm ourselves *with the same mind* as that by which Christ was animated, “who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,” and submitting to the pain. Thus boldly and resolutely set your hearts against sin, to resist its assaults, to weaken and at length destroy its power. For such was the purpose of Christ’s death, to redeem a people to himself, who should *no longer live to the lusts of men*, (according to the ways too common in the world,) but to *the will of God*.

We cannot but know that there are two ways of living. There is a way of *living to the lusts of men*;

¹ Matt. xxvii. 30.

² ἀπλιζεσθε.

living in such a manner as the corrupt nature of men inclines them to; indulging such a disposition as every one may find in himself and perceive in others. And there is a way of *living to the will of God*; making it our first and last business to serve him, and not ourselves. These two ways are contrary one to the other. No man can live in both. No man of his own accord, and of his own natural disposition, till it is changed by divine grace, lives *to the will of God*: and no man who is led by divine grace lives *to the lusts of men*.

The worst and commonest of those evil desires and practices are now mentioned, that the Christian may from the first renounce them.

3. *For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.*

Here he speaks of those who had not been early brought to the knowledge of God, or honoured their Creator from their youth, and who had therefore much to leave, and change, and repent of. *The time past of our life may suffice us* to have lived as the Gentiles who know not God; following the evil desires of their nature, and not considering what God commands or approves;—rioting in *excess of wine*; not taking the comforts or refreshments of life as blessings sent from God, to be used with thankfulness to his glory; but abusing them to their own disgrace as reasonable creatures, and to the dishonour of him whom they ought to serve. Taking a part *in revellings and banquetings*: joining

in assemblies where those meet who pay no heed to God's will, and where those who have any respect for him, are too apt to lose it by the influence of the company around them. These are the idols of the world; and to be given to these is *abominable idolatry*: not indeed the idolatry of the heathen of old offered to graven images, but the no better idolatry of the heart, and just as contrary to the renewed and purified nature of the Christian. That nature is far too weak and feeble to bear discouragement; the old nature is far too strong and rebellious to require the excitement of *revellings, or banquetings, or excess of wine*. For all these things, if these things have unhappily been indulged, *the past time may suffice*, and more than suffice. A single day of our short fleeting life is too much to live in neglect of God or disregard of the soul. So the Christian judges: he "lives no longer unto himself, but unto him who died for him:" and if in the former days of his ignorance he has lived to the world and not to God, he resolves that what remains shall be spent in a better service, and aim at a worthier return.

A man who is following this course, will not only be different in his ways from what he has been before, but he will be different from many of those around him; and these will see his altered habits, and wonder, and perhaps think it ground of blame.

4. *Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:*

5. *Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.*

6. *For for this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.*

Many *think it strange* ; wonder to see the Christian walk so strictly, so circumspectly, and deny himself the carnal and worldly pleasures which others follow—follow so eagerly as if it was impossible to live without them. This was what the Gentiles and the unconverted Jews thought of those among their brethren who had been brought over to the faith by the apostles' preaching. These became a subject of astonishment to them. They saw them leading new lives ; becoming new creatures ; giving up the practices in which they had before indulged, but which they now knew to be sinful practices : and whilst they renounced such habits, pursuing instead the ways of holiness and piety, walking soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, for the sake of a reward in heaven. . And this appeared to them strange and unintelligible. So the ways of those who live for one world, will always seem to those who are living for another. That life cannot be right in the sight of God, which is not too precise and solemn in the eyes of the careless multitude. This, we perceive, was the case eighteen hundred years ago ; and this is the case still. The courses being different, those who take them are opposite to one another. But whereas the worldly and ungodly man looks upon the sincere Christian with dislike, *speaking evil of him* : finding cause of accusation and ridicule against him ;—the Christian looks on him with pity. No scoffs or taunts can

ruffle his mind, much less divert him from his course. For many reasons, and for this among others, which the apostle mentions: he knows that they who utter such reproaches *shall give an account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead*. He knows that such has been the case from the first: that they who have gone before, and are now fallen asleep in the hope of the gospel, have been *judged according to man's judgment*, and suffered *in the flesh whilst living to God in the spirit*. Men have condemned them; but they live unto God; and “their hope is full of immortality.”³

It is this which the Christian often calls to mind. It is this which makes him consent to *suffer in the flesh*, by mortifying its irregular desires; it is this which makes him fly from all unrighteousness, all *excess of riot* into which others run:—he remembers the end: he remembers *him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead*: and therefore he often asks himself, What account shall I be able to render, if I use the talent entrusted to me as an unfaithful steward: if I waste my talent of fortune, in *banquetings and revellings*: my talent of time, in the idle and profane company which attends them: my talent of understanding, in things which only pertain to this present world? He knows that the day is at hand, when sensuality and excess will seem far more hateful to those who have indulged them, than holiness and temperance seem now: and that the

³ Any interpretation which may be attempted of this 6th verse, can only be considered as a choice among difficulties.

profane and worldly will most sincerely wish that they had followed that righteous and godly life, which they now wonder at and speak evil of in others.

The time, whether for suffering in the flesh, or for indulgence, is not long: and the only spirit which befits the Christian during the short interval allotted to him here, is a spirit of sobriety, watchfulness, and prayer. For this spirit alone will enable him to “deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,” and to *live his time in the flesh to the will of God*, answering the purpose for which he was redeemed.

LECTURE XXXVI.

CHRISTIANS EXHORTED TO WATCHFULNESS, PRAYER, AND BROTHERLY AFFECTION.

1 PETER iv. 7—11.

7. But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

In what we were last reading, St. Peter had exhorted to mortification and self-denial. And the shortness of the time during which the pain and labour of self-denial can be endured, is a strong reason for indifference towards earthly things, a strong inducement to strive after things heavenly.

Therefore he reminds them, that *the end of all things is at hand*.

The end of the Jewish nation was nigh; seven years after this epistle was written, Jerusalem was destroyed. But the destruction of Jerusalem would not much affect those to whom Peter writes: they were "strangers scattered through different countries," some of whom had left Judea, and others had never belonged to it. The truth relates to every man at all times, that *the end of all earthly things is at hand* to him. How near is death, even to the youngest! How uncertain life, even to the strongest! So that if as many years had been added to the existence of Jerusalem as had passed since it was first built, or were added to the world as have passed since it was created,—God permitting it to endure so long—we might still say to every man, *The end of all things is at hand*; we might still require him to live with this thought uppermost in his heart.

And if so, the rest follows: *Be ye therefore sober; sober-minded: and watch unto prayer*. Sobriety of thought grows out of the uncertainty of all earthly things: it is that wisdom which weighs them according to their real value: neither overrating nor underrating what is present: imitating the habit of mind which St. Paul says he had acquired: (Phil. iv. 12.) "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry; both to abound and to suffer need."

And the same cause which produces a spirit of moderation, will also produce a spirit of prayer.

Whatever comes, prayer is the attitude in which the Christian would desire to be found. If we certainly knew that the end of all things was so nigh to ourselves, that our hours were numbered, and a few days would terminate our earthly course, we should be disposed for nothing except earnest prayer: we should not need to be exhorted to it as a duty; we should fly to it as a resource. In ordinary life, though the exercise of prayer will not be the only occupation, it will be the uniform habit: but this cannot be, without watchfulness: without vigilance to seize the proper opportunities, and keep them sacred to their purpose. The resolution is required, and the regularity of Daniel, who "kneeled on his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God." "At midnight," says the psalmist, (Ps. cxix. 62,) I will rise to give thanks to thee, because of thy righteous judgments." "Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate on thy word."

As this habitual prayerfulness is the right state of heart towards God, so habitual charity or love is the right state of mind towards man. So that Peter adds:

8. *And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*¹

Where this feeling exists, all will be kept in harmony. Love will cover the multitude of offences which may arise. When men are associated toge-

¹ Alluding to Prov. x. 12. "Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins." The idea would have been conveyed more distinctly if the word *ἀμαρτίας* had been here rendered errors, offences.

ther, there will be occasional transgressions, requiring mutual candour and concession : it cannot be otherwise in human nature : but christian love, instead of blazoning offences abroad, and so aggravating the evil, will cover them as with a veil, and thus the peace of society will be preserved. It was Peter himself who had asked, (Matt. xviii. 22,) Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him : until seven times ?” And to Peter himself had the answer been returned ; “ I say not unto thee, until seven times ; but until seventy times seven.”

There are many other ways in which the same principle of brotherly love will find opportunity of exercise.

9. *Use hospitality one to another without grudging.*

10. *As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

11. *If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God : if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth : that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

Here Christians are exhorted to that general cordiality and mutual interest, which befits members of the same family. If any were on a journey, they should be received as guests. A Christian coming into a strange city would inquire what christians lived there : and in them he would expect to find friends. Like Paul, in his voyage to Rome, when he came to Puteoli : (Acts xxviii. 14 :) And there, says Luke, “ we found friends, and were desired to tarry seven days.” And so Lydia, at

Philippi: (Acts xvi. 15.) “She was no sooner converted to the faith, than she desired to *use hospitality without grudging*: if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.” She *had received the gift*:² she enjoyed the bounty of God, who had prospered her trade; and she desired to *minister the same, as a good steward of the manifold grace of God*: who bestows on one, authority; on another, ability; on another, fortune; but still the same God ministers all to all, and they who have freely received, should also freely give; “doing good unto all men, but specially unto them that be of the household of faith.”

Others may possess more important gifts; those of a spiritual nature. Let them also keep the same end in view. Some may be able to speak the words of wisdom: to warn, advise, exhort. *Let them speak* as the Scriptures dictate: and let no private opinions or “false philosophy” divert them from *the oracles of God*, as the only rule of christian truth. So if *any man minister* to the wants of the community, whether as a deacon appointed for the purpose,

²The context is decidedly opposed to the interpretation of *χαρισμα* in this place as a *spiritual* gift. *Χαρισμα* is any divine blessing, though commonly used especially in reference to some kind of *spiritual* blessing. But Rom. vi. 23, it is contrasted with death as the wages of sin, and answers to Hesychius's interpretation, *χαρισμα, δωρον*. As also, 2 Cor. i. 11, it is the divine mercy in sparing Paul's life. St. Peter, perhaps, selected it as applying equally to the different qualifications of which he speaks in the sentence, whether temporal, mental, or spiritual.

or a private individual, let him minister “with diligence,” and refer all to *the ability*³ which God giveth, who is the author and preserver of whatever strength man has: *that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

LECTURE XXXVII.

ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PATIENT SUFFERING IN THE CHRISTIAN CAUSE.

1 PETER iv. 12—16.

12. *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you :*

13. *But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings ; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*

If prosperity, or honour, or earthly comfort, were proofs of the favour of God, or if afflictions were evidences of his displeasure, then Christians must needs be discouraged when tribulation or persecution comes upon them. For this reason the warnings are frequent throughout the whole of the New Testament, setting the Christian right on the subject

³ Ability, *ισχυος*.

of such trials; bidding him expect them beforehand; consoling him when they arrive. St. Peter's expression deserves notice: *Think it not strange*, as a foreigner in a new country thinks it strange to meet with things he had not expected. He had used the same word before, saying, that the heathen and ungodly *think it strange* when Christians do not join them in their "excess of riot:" they know not the cause of such self-restraint, and therefore are surprised. Be not ye surprised in the same manner, at the *fiery trial*, the persecution, which is taking place among you, *as though some strange thing had happened to you*, of which you knew not the motive or the end. It is to put you to the test; to prove your faith and patience: that they who are not really of God, may "go out from us," and be separated; and that they who are of God, may be purified and perfected. When ore is cast into the furnace, two purposes are answered. Much is cast in which is not really metal, but had been mixed up with it: and even to the true metal much dross adheres. The furnace both purges the metal of its dross, and destroys that portion of the heap which is entirely worthless. So "when persecutions and afflictions arise because of the word," the false disciple "is offended," and falls away. The true disciple comes out of the trial, not only proved to be pure gold, but made far more pure by the process which he has undergone. Peter had himself passed through this trial. He had been brought before the rulers, and elders, and scribes: he had been imprisoned, had been beaten, had been threatened, if he dared to "speak in the name of

Jesus.”¹ But this did not take him by surprise: he had been assured that it would be so: that he should be “brought before governors and kings for Christ’s sake,” and “hated of all men,”² and persecuted from city to city. “And therefore he thought it not strange: and was enabled to go out from the council, not dismayed, but “rejoicing that he was counted worthy to suffer shame” in his Master’s cause. Therefore he could exhort others to rejoice, inasmuch as they were *partakers of Christ’s sufferings*. Their sufferings are of the same nature as their Lord’s: have the like character to distinguish them. Christ’s sufferings were voluntary: no man took his life from him. He laid it down of himself. So the Christian’s sufferings are voluntary, when for the sake of his religion he submits to reproach, or risk, or loss: such as he need not undergo, except as a faithful disciple of his Lord. Christ’s sufferings were unmerited: as his very judge allowed, “I find no cause of death in him.” So the Christian’s trials are unmerited, when they beset him because he chooses rather to fear and serve God than to obey man. And, further, Christ’s sufferings were for a great end; the redemption of mankind; the “bringing many sons to glory.” And so the Christian suffers for an important end; the greatest that can actuate a man: for the sake of his own everlasting welfare. He submits to privation, that he may secure this; and when for this purpose he does endure the cross, for the sake of the immortal crown, he is *partaker of Christ’s*

¹ Acts iv. 18; v. 40, 41.

² Matt. x. 18—22.

sufferings: and may hope, that when his glory shall be revealed, he may be glad also with exceeding joy.

But here we must be guarded against mistake. It is suffering "for righteousness sake" which makes the righteous man, and receives the righteous man's reward.

Not all suffering is suffering for religion. They might suffer, and have God against them as well as man. If they suffered as evil doers, guilty of fraud or violence, or as rash imprudent persons, bringing down anger upon themselves by meddling with matters in which they had no concern, they must not imagine that God's Spirit would support them, or his favour recompense them.

14. *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.*

15. *But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busy body in other men's matters.*

16. *Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.*

To determine what it is to *suffer as a Christian*, we must go back to the origin of that name. It was first given at Antioch, to distinguish the disciples of Christ: and therefore, to suffer as a Christian, is to suffer because you are a follower of Christ Jesus. A man who resigns what otherwise he might enjoy, a lucrative situation, an opportunity of gain, an immediate gratification, because he cannot possess them without transgressing some

christian duty, he may be said *to suffer as a Christian*. Another who forfeits the favour of his friends or patrons, who offends the party to which he belongs, by upholding the principles of the Gospel instead of the ordinary practice of the world; he may be said *to suffer as a Christian*. And such an one *need not be ashamed*: rather let him *glorify God in this behalf*, who has first inspired him with faith, and then given him opportunity to maintain and prove it. He is *reproached for the name of Christ*: but he is happy: for *the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon him*,³ and supports him in preferring things eternal to things temporal. It is better to undergo the reproach of man than of God. It is better to suffer inconvenience now, than to incur the sentence of which the Lord has spoken, when he says, (Luke ix. 26,) “Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels.”

³ The phrase is quoted from Isa. xi. 2.

LECTURE XXXVIII.

ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PERSEVERANCE IN WELL-DOING, FROM THE CONTEMPLATION OF FUTURE JUDGMENT.

1 PETER iv. 17—19.

17. *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

Here the apostle refers to what had gone before. He had spoken of some, who opposed and reproached the Christians. He had warned the Christians against disgracing their profession by evil doing. He had encouraged them to suffer, if need be, for righteousness' sake. And then he alludes to the motive which should actuate them both to obedience and endurance. *For the time is nigh, shall soon be,*¹ when all must stand before the

¹ So the ellipsis might be best filled up. In the original there is no verb. Our translators have supplied the verb *is come*, probably referring to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem. But the strangers scattered through Cappadocia and Pontus, and such parts of Asia, would find the destruction of Jerusalem no particular time of trial. The thought seems to be rather that which is common with St. Peter, "The end of all things is at hand;" and 2 Pet. iii. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be?"

judgment-seat of God ; the household of faith, *the house of God* amongst the rest. And if this *judgment first begin at us* ; if they are not exempt from it, who are nearest to the Father, what *shall the end be of those who obey not the Gospel?* What must they expect who either walk unworthily of the family into which they are adopted ; or who put the gospel of God from them, and offend “the children of the kingdom ?” Look towards that season, and you will bear the present with patience, and leave it for God to judge the adversary.

18. *And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear ?*

19. *Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

To one part of St. Peter's sentence here we readily agree : we assent to the danger awaiting *the ungodly and the sinner*. But what must we think of his first assertion, that *the righteous scarcely are saved?* The righteous, the consistent Christian : they who have believed the voice of God speaking in the Gospel, and they who have obeyed it, *scarcely are saved.*² Many have been at a loss to comprehend this saying : and have even supposed that Peter could not be alluding to the final day of the Lord, but to the judgment then coming upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem by the destruction of their place and nation. Yet, if we examine, we shall find nothing in his words which is not easily explained, and confirmed by the whole of Scripture.

² μολις, with difficulty.

For, first, surely it may be said of the righteous that he is *scarcely saved*, when he is only saved by the blood of Christ shed for him on the cross: when such was his original corruption, and such his actual transgressions, that the infinite holiness and offended justice of God required this sacrifice. And this is the first principle of our faith. There is a great difference among men, even among righteous men: but if the Lord were severe to mark what is done amiss, who could “abide his coming?” And all Scripture leads to one point, that Christ is the only door of access to God or heaven: for that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”³

And in asserting this, Scripture does not contradict but confirm the feeling of the righteous man himself. Looking to his own heart, he feels its weakness: looking to his works, he feels their unworthiness: whichever way he looks, he perceives his short-comings: and reflecting on this, which is really his state before God, he will declare of himself, whatever others may judge concerning him, that he has no hope nor confidence but in the cross of the Redeemer.

Now, surely we may allow that a man is *scarcely saved*, when he is only saved by the mighty sacrifice of the Son of God, coming in his nature and dying for his sins.

This, then, is the first reason why the righteous

³ Rom. iii. 23.

scarcely are saved. And the second is, that they are not saved without constant diligence and labour.

Here, too, we are supported, as before, both by Scripture and experience. Scripture declares the necessity of labour. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate. For many" (when it is too late) "shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Scripture also points out the necessity of watchfulness. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." "Watch and pray always, that ye may be counted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." Scripture declares the necessity of self-denial. "If a man doth not take up his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple." "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway."

Surely, then, we may affirm, that a man is *scarcely saved*, who is not saved without habitual watchfulness, persevering labour, and patient self-denial.

Especially when the experience of every earnest Christian proves, that all these means of holiness are absolutely required by him. The temper, the disposition, the graces or qualities which show a meetness for heaven, are clearly laid down: but no less certainly are these qualities foreign to the natural heart, and the natural heart averse from them:

they must be cultivated therefore, like plants which are not in their proper climate; cultivated with care: and if that care is relaxed, they will decline and wither. It needs but a short remission of prayer and vigilance, to give unchristian feelings, tempers, and desires an advantage over us. To forget that we are in a state of trial, that we have corrupt hearts, that we are watched by a spiritual enemy, would be ruin to the soul. There is no safety but to the man "who feareth always," and "taketh heed lest he fall."

If such, then, is the case, even with *the righteous*: even with those who have been brought to "walk with God" in the world, and have renounced all sin, as "the transgression of his law:" *where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* What shall be the end of those who, instead of obeying the gospel of God, oppose those who would obey it, and hinder them from entering in? The judgment seat of God is no light thing. And is it not well worth any present loss or sacrifice or suffering to secure to ourselves a refuge against that day? Is there not reason why those for whom, according to the will of God suffering is appointed, should *commit the keeping of their souls to him*: knowing that "He is faithful who hath promised, and will with the temptation make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it?" From the support which in every age has been given to the righteous, when reproach or loss, danger or persecution have befallen them, they have every encouragement to persevere *in well doing*, and to feel assured that "all things shall work together for good to them that love God." And certainly

there is nothing which need dismay them in the words of St. Peter here. *The righteous scarcely are saved*: are only saved with difficulty and exertion. This agrees with all the feelings and confessions of a disciple of Christ. It reminds him of the many hindrances which beset him both from within and from without in the way of salvation. It reminds him of the watchfulness in prayer, and the earnestness in labour, which are required to “make his calling and election sure.” It reminds him of the prop, on which alone he dares to lean: and draws him closer to the rock on which alone his foundation must be laid. But having tried this, and being confident of its strength; though he is serious, he is without disturbance; though he is careful, he is not alarmed or apprehensive. He is *scarcely saved*. But still he *is saved*. “For there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Therefore he is able to *commit his soul to God, as unto a faithful Creator*; and being cleansed from sin, to serve Him with a quiet mind.

LECTURE XXXIX.

THE ELDERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH
EXHORTED TO DILIGENCE AND HUMILITY.

1 PETER v. 1—7.

1. *The elders which are among you 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 :*

We are told (Acts xiv. 23) that Paul and Barnabas went through the different countries where disciples had been made, and “ordained them elders in every church.” So likewise, before he left that part of Asia, Paul sent to Ephesus, (Acts xx. 17,) “and called the elders of the church,” and besought them “to take heed to themselves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers.” Those, therefore, were the teachers and pastors of the christian congregations whom Peter now exhorts, as himself *an elder*. Though an apostle, to whom pertained the duty of ordaining elders, he could not forget the time when the commission was so solemnly given him ; “Simon, lovest thou me ? Feed my sheep. Simon, lovest thou me ? Feed my lambs.”¹ Such was the office of the elders, whom

¹ John xxi. 16, 17.

he now encourages to act the part of diligent and tender shepherds: reminding them that he had been himself *a witness of the sufferings* by which the church was purchased, and was also looking forward to *the glory which should be revealed*, when the church now militant on earth should become the church triumphant in heaven.

By such motives he exhorts the elders.

2. *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;*

3. *Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*

4. *And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

The disciples of Christ are often described under the image of a flock; partly because it suggests the idea of separation. A flock is kept by itself: distinguished from others who do not belong to it. So our Lord said of his people: "I know my sheep, and am known of mine." "A stranger will they not follow; but will flee from him; because they hear not the voice of strangers."²

A flock also is under protection: defended from the dangers which in some countries would destroy it: and restrained from straying out of its proper place, its place of safety.

A flock, too, is fed, or tended. This is the shepherd's office; to provide his flock with the nourish-

² John x. 15.

ment which they require ; to direct them into good pastures, and to supply them with salutary food.

And there are two ways in which a flock may be governed. Sometimes they are harshly treated : urged along with violence : hastily and rudely driven, by those who act *as lords over God's heritage*. Sometimes the shepherd leads his sheep with a quiet, steady pace, stopping for a while when he sees it fit that they should rest, and moving onward at the proper season : showing them, not forcing them, the way they should go. There he is an *example to the flock* : like " the great Shepherd " himself, " he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out : he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice."³ " He maketh them lie down in green pastures, he leadeth them beside the still waters."⁴ Such is the true shepherd : an " example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."⁵ Though he *takes the oversight of the flock, not by constraint, but willingly* ; his inducement to take it is not base or sordid : not temporal, but eternal. He looks forward to the promise ; that *when the chief Shepherd shall appear to take account, he shall receive a crown of glory*.

5. *Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility : for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

6. *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time :*

³ John x. 3, 4.

⁴ Ps. xxiii.

⁵ 1 Tim. iv. 12.

7. *Casting all your care upon him ; for he careth for you.*

The fruit of the natural disposition is too commonly mutual strife. The natural disposition of Christians is subdued by the Spirit of God ; and the fruit is mutual submission. *Yea, all of you be subject one to another.* And this grows out of humility. As pride and self-conceit engender strife, so humility disarms contention. Now humility is the Christian's distinctive dress, the garb in which he should *be clothed*. He who, but for the death of God's own Son, would have been lying under God's wrath and condemnation, must *be clothed with humility*. He who has daily need to come before God, entreating, not that his merits may be weighed, but his offences pardoned,—must *be clothed with humility*. He who, whatever he is, owes all to the grace of God, must *be clothed with humility*. Nor is this any new commandment, though there were fresh reasons for observing it. The same has been the rule from the beginning : *God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the humble.* And therefore humility is the surest road to honour. God is the source of all true honour ; and he *exalts* in his own *due time* the humble and meek. Submit yourselves therefore to his will concerning you ; not giving place to anxious fears or cares, but *casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.*

It might be said, and justly said, to a child, Leave yourself in your parent's hand : dismiss anxiety : he will provide for all your need.

But earthly parents are not always faithful to

their duty. As the prophet writes, "Can a woman forget her sucking child? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."⁶ God is ever mindful of his people, and "will have mercy on his afflicted."

Again, an earthly parent may have the will, but not the power. It cannot be so with our heavenly Father. He is able to do above all that we ask or think. You may cast your care on him with confidence, that "all things shall work together for good to them that love him." It is part of the order of his providence, that they who "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," are preserved by his love, and defended by his power.

LECTURE XL.

EXHORTATION TO WATCHFULNESS AND PERSEVERANCE.

1 PETER v. 8—14.

8. *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*

It is a known character of the worst men, that they desire to involve others in their own ruin. Such is the character of the devil. Having himself lost all hope, he strives to make the case of man as

⁶ Isa. xlix. 15. !

wretched as his own. Therefore he is an *adversary*. When Adam was first placed in paradise, he envied his happiness, and led him into disobedience. So by one man sin entered into the world." And now that Christ had come to restore the world to God, Satan would be the adversary of every soul that should "turn from darkness to light, from his power to God." Like a beast of prey, *like a roaring lion, he walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*. And if he find any not *sober*, not *vigilant*, any one out of his proper place, and venturing into danger; any one off his guard, so as to be easily surprised into sin; he seizes on him, as the lion on the flock which the shepherd has left, or on the lamb which has strayed from the fold.

But he who in his own person conquered Satan, has also enabled and instructed us to conquer him. Peter points out the means.

9. *Whom resist, stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.*

Among the various temptations by which the adversary might harass them, one would be this thought suggested to the mind:—If we were indeed chosen of God to be his people, he would not suffer us to be thus tried. The objection was cast against our Lord himself: "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him."¹ Therefore St. Peter repeats what he had written before; it was no "strange thing which happened to them," if they were tried in various ways: *the same*

¹ St. Matt. xxvii. 43.

afflictions are accomplished in their brethren that are in the world. “In the world they must have tribulation.” They were not called unto rest, or peace, or comfort now ; it might be the very reverse. It might be, that their very calling, the religion which they had embraced, should prove a hindrance to their present ease.

How many persons, even to this hour, might lead a life of greater outward comfort, and escape both reproach and ill will, if in their sentiments or their practice they would conform to the world around them, the families they live with, or the companions with which they are associated ? These need encouragement and comfort ; and they find it in knowing, *that the same afflictions have been accomplished in their brethren* : that trials and difficulties have always attended the maintenance of serious religion.

Therefore they must constantly keep the end in view. Here was the contest, the trial : the reward, the crown, hereafter. And these very afflictions might all tend to their salvation through the grace of God working with them.

10. *But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*

11. *To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

The storms and frosts of winter are as needful to healthy vegetation, as the milder air and genial warmth of summer. And so it often happens, that the words adapted by St. Paul in one sense to our blessed Lord, are applicable in another sense to his

disciples, and they are “made perfect through sufferings.” They are *stablished*, for instance, through temptation. We may suppose that through some doubts thrown in his way, or some evil thought suggested to his mind, a man’s faith is shaken. This leads him to examine the foundations of his faith: he finds them fixed upon a rock: and his faith is *stablished* on a firmer basis than before. Another is assailed by bad counsel, allured by bad example. He calls the Scripture to his aid, and finds it written, “My son, when sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” “O my soul, enter not into their assembly.” “For all these things God shall call thee into judgment.” Thus he comes out of the trial *strengthened*. He is stronger in the faith than before, because he has proved his armour and his weapons, and they have borne the attack. And so by degrees he is *settled*: fixed down upon an immovable foundation, which no tempests can shake, no assaults can overthrow. And yet this is not the effect of temptation or opposition in itself: they are but the means through which the effect is produced: God is the doer of it all; as St. Peter never allows us to forget, but says, *May the God of all grace thus stablish, strengthen, settle you: May He cause all the circumstances ye must pass through, all those trials and reverses ye must experience, to “build you up” in the faith, “and give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified.”*

He concludes by recommending to them Silvanus, the christian brother by whose hands he sent the epistle; and states the object which he had in

writing, the same which had led Barnabas to visit the infant churches at Antioch, that he might exhort them “with full purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord.”²

12. *By Silvanus,³ a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.*

13. *The church that is at Babylon,⁴ elected together with you, saluteth you ; and so doth Marcus my son.⁵*

14. *Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

² Acts xi. 23.

³ The same (it is believed) as is called Silas in the Acts.

⁴ It was anciently supposed that by Babylon, Rome is signified, and that Peter wrote this from Rome. Certainly Babylon is the mystical name given to Rome in the book of Revelation. But the book of Revelation, like other books of prophecy, is full of emblems. Peter was merely stating the place from which he wrote : it was no case for the use of figures : nor is there any reason to believe that if he wrote from *Rome*, he would date from *Babylon*.

⁵ Marcus is supposed to be the evangelist. Peter calls him his son, as Paul calls Timothy his son ; his “son in the faith.”

THE SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

LECTURE XLI.

THE PROMISE OF GOD FOR THE RENEWAL OF
MAN'S NATURE.

2 PETER i. 1—4.

A. D. 63.

1. *Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ :*

2. *Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.*

St. Peter tells us afterwards why he wrote this second epistle : addressing it to the same bodies of Christians as the former, after the interval probably of about a year. He was aware that his apostleship was drawing to a close, and that he should shortly be summoned from the world : so he chose to give a parting testimony, to leave a last injunction to them that were living in *the like precious faith* as he was prepared to die in. The prayer is, that *grace and peace be multiplied unto them*, through the only channel by which it can be conveyed : *through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord*. “ This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” And if this is

the source of life eternal, so it is the source of whatever is connected with that gift; *as grace and peace*. These are among the blessings of which he proceeds to speak, the blessings belonging to the Gospel.

3. *According as his divine power hath given to us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue :*

4. *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.*

Having escaped the corruption that is in the world. We learn from this, that the state of the world is not a state to remain in, but to escape from; a state of corruption, through each man's lust, i. e. natural inclination, going in a contrary direction to the will of God: alienated from Him, and set upon this present world. Peter might think, first, of the corruption among his own countrymen. We learn from the histories of that age, that the wickedness of the Jews was such as might be expected to call down upon that nation the judgments which did soon overwhelm them. He would think also of heathen lands. St. Paul has left us (Rom. i.) a painful description of the corruption that prevailed amongst these: and we too well know that he did not make the picture too dark and gloomy. And if we look at the world as it is now:—though we may justly be thankful for what has been done by the Gospel—shall we find no reason why it should be called *corrupt*? Ask the parent who is anxious for the welfare of a child: when he sends him to take his place among his equals, has he no cause to fear *the corruption*

that is in the world? The same lust, the same un-sanctified or inordinate desire, whether of pleasure, or of honours, or of fortune, still prevails, and makes “the course of this world” a course which leads away from God.

Such is the state of the world: and from this God has given us escape, *through the knowledge of him who hath called us to glory and virtue.* God hath given unto us *all things that pertain to life and godliness*, not as they were given to Adam, as part of his own nature, as belonging to the condition in which he was created; but as a special blessing, growing out of special means, and coming in the way of deliverance from evil; of *escape from corruption*; as the peace and comfort of his father’s home was afforded to the prodigal, instead of the misery and famine of the “far country” from which he returned.

The apostle speaks of the method in which this blessing is conveyed. He has given us *exceeding great and precious promises.* Promises of forgiveness, though we have transgressed; promises of the favour and love of God; promises of everlasting glory are set before us. These promises affect the heart, and dispose it towards the attainment of salvation. It is the nature of God to attract by promise: and it is the nature of man to be so influenced: not to be forced or driven, but led and persuaded. “Come, follow me,” said the Lord Jesus, “and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.” “Why will ye die, O house of Israel?” “O that thou hadst seen, even now in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace!” “How often

would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her brood under her wings !”

To the heart which responds to these promises a new nature is imparted. The prophecy is fulfilled, “ A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.”¹ Thus the *divine nature* is received into the corrupt nature : and the stream is made clear which was impure.

Certainly there is that in the nature of God, of which no creature can partake. His eternity ; his omniscience ; his power ; his majesty : a man can no more approach them, than he can approach the sun in its noon-day splendour. But the beams of light issue from the sun, and these man can receive and use through the faculties which he enjoys. And so when goodness, when holiness, which also belong to the divine nature, are imparted to him, he becomes *partaker of the divine nature* ; his original nature is changed, he is renewed after his Maker’s image : he is no longer carnal, but spiritual.

And there is an important meaning in the word *nature*. The new spirit which he receives is now a part of him ; and the life of goodness and holiness becomes habitual, just as the opposite life is habitual to those who remain “ servants of corruption.” When he speaks meekly, discreetly, and charitably : when he acts mercifully, and liberally, and courteously : when he thinks piously, humbly, and gratefully : it is not like the flowing of water which is violently forced out of its natural course, but like

¹ Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

the stream which runs in its own proper channel. The bias, the tendency of his character is set in the right direction. Sometimes, indeed, the old nature prevails. "What man is he that liveth and sinneth not?" But as goodness is unnatural to the man who is without the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus, though sometimes he may do a good thing : so, on the other hand, to act wrong is contrary to the nature of one who lives on the precious promises of the Gospel. Moses, we know, was once surprised into wilful passion, and "spake unadvisedly with his lips."² But this was against the divine nature implanted in him ; and the Psalmist especially represents it as such, when he makes it a reproach against the Israelites that they so provoked Moses. And such must be the case with every man who is really *partaker of the divine nature*. His humble spirit must not be that of Saul, or of Ahab,³ taken up for a season : it must be his habit to be of a contrite heart, and "tremble at God's word." And so in all the graces of the christian life ; there must be a conformity to the will of God, arising out of the "renewing of the spirit of the mind." The difficulty must be, not to turn the practice from evil to good, but from good to evil ; as was the case with that prophet of old, whose brother prophet deceived him, and only by dint of false assurances persuaded him to violate the command which he was desirous to observe.⁴

Thus it is, that the divine nature is begun here, and gradually prevails over the corruption in which

² Ps. cvi. 33.

³ See 1 Sam. xv. 24. 1 Kings xxi. 27.

⁴ 1 Kings xiii. 18.

we are born. Hereafter it will be perfected, where there is no sin to tempt, no remainder of infirmity to yield, and no evil world to overcome.

LECTURE XLII.

THE QUALITIES EXPECTED IN A CHRISTIAN.

2 PETER i. 5—9.

5. *And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue ; and to virtue knowledge ;*

6. *And to knowledge temperance ; and to temperance patience ; and to patience godliness ;*

7. *And to godliness brotherly kindness : and to brotherly kindness charity.*

To be “called to glory and virtue;” to be “made partakers of the divine nature;” to be “delivered from the corruption that is in the world:”—these are the privileges of Christians, as St. Peter had just before declared. He now speaks more particularly: and describes the features of the character which is produced when the human nature is renewed by the divine.

The foundation of the whole is FAITH. The qualities of which he speaks are to be *added to faith*. He concludes that those whom he addresses are “in the faith:” have received Jesus Christ as the author and giver of salvation, and of all things that accompany salvation. That faith is as it were the

stem, on which the qualifications are engrafted which he proceeds to mention. As the Lord had said, "If ye abide in me, ye shall bring forth much fruit." First, be sure that faith is sound and flourishing, and then use all diligence to furnish and adorn it with the fruits of righteousness.

This, then, is the fruit which the branches are to bear. First, *add to your faith virtue*; virtue in general: "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, and if there be any praise, think on these things."¹

And to virtue, add *knowledge*. Be not satisfied with the "first principles of the doctrine of Christ:" but pray "that God may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened."² Search the Scriptures, and meditate on them; "that your profiting may appear to all." "That the soul be without knowledge, is not good."

And to knowledge, add *temperance*; that self-command which keeps the thoughts, desires, and actions in captivity to the obedience of Christ: which does not indulge, but restrains appetite; which "knows how to abound, or suffer need:" to be satisfied in the one case, and to be moderate in

¹ Phil. iv. 8. Many are disposed to translate ἀπερη in the classical sense of valour, courage: that resolution which is required in every Christian. But this interpretation, however good in itself, is not warranted by any example of such usage of the word ἀπερη in Scripture.

² Eph. i. 17.

the other. "Take heed," said the Lord, "lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life; and so that day come upon you unawares."

And to temperance, add *patience*; a resolute endurance of those difficulties which beset the christian life, and of the sorrows and trials with which God often sees fit to prove his children. Be always ready to say, "Not my will, but thine be done." "Stablish your hearts," and "possess your souls in patience;" for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

And to temperance add *godliness*; a reverential fear, a holy love of God, and an habitual reference to his will. This will be manifested, and, in return, this state of mind will be maintained, by the study of his word: by public worship; by private and family devotion; by an intimate concern in whatever promotes his glory.

And to godliness, *brotherly kindness*. Christians should consider themselves as all belonging to one family: children of the same God: heirs of a common inheritance: reconciled to God by the same Redeemer, and engaged in the same journey through this present world. Therefore they should act as brethren: be ready to relieve one another of the burthens which may fall on some more heavily than on others: to take an interest in a neighbour, not as idle spectators, but as those who look on to see what assistance they can afford. This is the very test of discipleship, nay, of spiritual hope: "By this we know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren."³

³ John iii. 14.

And to brotherly kindness, *charity*; or, love. Brotherly kindness is rather shown towards those who live with us, who think with us, who act with us. Love extends to all. Brotherly kindness, for instance, assists those who are of the household of faith. Love exerts itself beyond: would strive to bring all within that household. Brotherly kindness may be felt towards those who are of our own party, and yet there may be a very bitter spirit towards those who differ from us. Love resists prejudices; finds excuses: "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

Such is christian conduct: such is the Christian's temper; such are the leading features of his character, as regards God, as regards himself, as regards his neighbour. Such is the standard which he should set up, however differing from ordinary practice or general opinion. Common life is like a stream, always tending downward. The Christian must strive against it. And the representation of St. Peter here is as it were a point, an object up the stream, which he must keep in view, and be always endeavouring to attain.

How he is to endeavour, we are also taught. *Giving all diligence.* A state of heart, a course of life so contrary to natural disposition, can only be acquired by bringing on our part to the work ⁴ *all diligence*; not by waiting till such disposition is wrought in us, but by taking as much pains to produce it, as if all depended on ourselves. We know well that it does not depend on ourselves: that God

⁴ παρεισφροντες.

must “work in us both to will and to do:” But it is equally sure that no man yet ever endeavoured, using the means provided for him in the Gospel, to bring his heart to a conformity with the will of God, who was not in the end enabled to succeed: his success being in proportion to the earnestness of his desire. And surely such an object deserves diligence. If a single individual be thus gifted, how useful is he! If a greater number had these dispositions, how would they embellish their neighbourhood; adorn the world in which they live; transform a barren wilderness into a fruitful plain!

These qualities, however, are not only to be cultivated, because they are useful to others, but because they are needful for ourselves. The very purpose for which Christ came, was to introduce such plants into the world; so that having grown up and flourished for a while, and brought forth fruit, they may be removed in his good time to the more suitable climate of heaven.

So the apostle expressly proceeds to say.

8. *For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

9. *But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.*

He that lacketh these things is blind: has an imperfect sight: discovers only part of what he ought to see.⁵ He perceives that the knowledge of Christ Jesus leads to reconciliation with God; he does not

⁵ μωπάζων.

see the purpose of that reconciliation. *He has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins*, not to the intent that he should lead a life of indolence or self-indulgence ; but that he might be “ zealous of good works,” “ which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.” Behold, thou art made whole,” said the Lord to the man whom he had healed : “ Go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee.”⁶ And such is, throughout, the language of the Gospel. It is the language used at baptism, when the child is received into the flock of Christ, and enlisted in the service of God, and renounces, in return, the vanities of the world and the evil desires of the flesh. And it is the continual proof that the covenant remains firm, that the man is not deceiving his own soul, when he *lacketh not these things*, and is walking before God righteously, soberly, and godly, as one who has been “ delivered from the corruption which is in the world.”

No one, indeed, will possess these excellences in perfection, or have advanced equally in them all. But no Christian must be altogether without them, or have the vices which are contrary to them. There can be no such thing as a vicious, intemperate, repining, undevout, malicious, hard-hearted Christian. Such a title and such a character cannot be joined together. The disciples of Christ are the disciples of him whose “ name was called Jesus,” because he “ should save his people from their sins.”

⁶ John v. 14.

LECTURE XLIII.

THE NECESSITY OF HOLINESS TO SECURE
SALVATION.

2 PETER i. 10—12.

10. *Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:*

11. *For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

Into that everlasting kingdom which our Lord and Saviour has purchased by his blood, there is no admittance to the workers of iniquity. "For without holiness shall no man see the Lord." Those alone will be admitted to dwell with him hereafter, who are here "made partakers of the divine nature, being delivered from the corruption which is in the world." Therefore the apostle exhorts his disciples to confirm and secure their election to eternal life,¹ by adding to faith those qualities which are intended

¹ In our English translation, the words might seem to admit of the interpretation, Make your election sure to yourselves and others. In our language the word *sure* may signify *certain*. But *βεβαιος* in the original has no ambiguity; it can only mean *firm* or *secure*.

to spring from faith : by “adding to faith virtue, and knowledge, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity.” So their *calling and election* to the kingdom of God would be like a building not only placed at first on a firm foundation, but, as it advanced farther, strengthened and secured by the compactness of its walls. And so, *they should never fall*. Without this, they might and would fall : though they might indulge false hopes, and deceive themselves with vain words : though they might say that they were the elect of God, chosen of him from the foundation of the world. So the Jews flattered themselves that they were “Abraham’s children.” But they were told, that if they were Abraham’s children, they would do the works of Abraham.² And so those are God’s chosen people, who do the works of his people. The same Spirit which has said, in the promise of the Saviour, “My sheep shall never perish ; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand ;” has also dictated the words of Peter, *If ye do these things, ye shall never fall* : ye shall never be disappointed of that which ye have been taught to expect, and are expecting : the kingdom of heaven shall be yours.

The parables in the twenty-fifth of Matthew describe to us with awful plainness what it is *to fall*. The servant who had received the talent from his lord, and refused to trade with it : in the end he *fell*. No entrance was *ministered unto him into the everlasting kingdom*. “Cast ye the unprofitable ser-

² John viii. 39.

vant into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.”³

The foolish virgins, who had taken their lamps, and taken no oil with them: who had not given diligence to adorn their faith with the christian graces of temperance, and patience, and godliness: these too advance to the door of the kingdom, and say, “Lord, open to us.” But no entrance is allowed. “Verily, I say unto you, I know you not.”⁴ This is *to fall* indeed: to fall without the hope of rising. “The accepted time” is past: and there is no repentance in the grave.

The same parables also represent the blessedness which is prepared for those who “walk religiously in good works,” and continue “stedfast unto the end.” “When the bridegroom came, they that were ready, went in with him to the marriage:” and the door was shut.”⁵ There was no longer any temptation to turn aside; no danger remained of becoming “idle and unfruitful.” And so they who had acted as good “stewards of the gift of God,” who had traded with the talents entrusted to them, and made a good return: these receive the gracious welcome, “Well done, good and faithful servants,⁶ enter ye into the joy of your Lord.” *An entrance is ministered unto them abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of their Lord and Saviour.*

What shall we say then? That so doing, we earn our own salvation? The Christian knows full well, that from first to last his salvation is of grace: “not of works, that any man should boast:” “for it is God who worketh in him both to will and to do of

³ Matt. xxv. 30.⁴ Ib. 12.⁵ Ib. 10.⁶ Ib. 23.

his good pleasure." But this conviction does not prevent him from *giving all diligence to make his calling and election sure*, by resisting whatever is contrary to the will of God, and cultivating all the fruits of righteousness. For he knows that without them, an entrance into the kingdom will not be ministered unto him. He knows that the same apostle who has taught him that "eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ,"⁷ did also "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling:" "kept under his body, and brought it under subjection, lest by any means, when he had preached to others, he himself should become a castaway."⁸

Wherefore, St. Peter proceeds to say,

12. *Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.*

This he felt to be needful. Though they knew the things that pertained to life and godliness, and had embraced them, the same means which first established, must still support them. The heart which has been turned from the things which it would otherwise pursue, to follow a course of christian conduct, is like a stream of water diverted from its natural channel. The tendency of the stream will always be to return to its former level: it will not keep its new direction without continual force and watching. And so with the heart. Godliness is not its natural level, its original tendency: and as an impulse is first required, that it may once take a different course, so an impulse is constantly

⁷ Rom. vi. 23.

⁸ 1 Cor. ix. 27.

required, that it may pursue the course which it has chosen. And therefore St. Peter *will not be negligent to put them in remembrance of these things, though they knew them*: though they had not now fresh principles to acquire. Few and simple are the truths of the Gospel: and yet they who *are established* in them, must be constantly learning: because, unless they are learning, they must unlearn: unless they go forward, they must “lose the things which they have wrought.” It is not more certain that the stream will carry back the vessel which has been labouring against it, when the mariner has ceased to ply his oars, than it is certain that corrupt nature will carry back the soul, which is not constantly put in remembrance of the things on which its salvation rests. Satan will take a thousand shapes, and use a thousand arts, to deceive it.

In the very point, for instance, here insisted on, the need of *making our election sure*; he will sometimes argue, that God does not behold iniquity in his people: sometimes, that his people will be inevitably secure, and preserved from iniquity, though they be not careful for themselves. So Satan will persuade, that the heart may be off its guard, and neglect to use all diligence that those things may abound in it, which must abound in the heirs of the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour.

We are here warned against thoughts like these: that building up ourselves in our most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, we may give all diligence “to keep always a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards man.”⁹ *For*

⁹ Jude 20; Acts xxiv. 16.

if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. “The righteous shall go into life eternal.”

LECTURE XLIV.

THE CERTAINTY OF THOSE THINGS WHICH CHRISTIANS BELIEVE.

2 PETER i. 13—18.

13. *Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance ;*

14. *Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.*

Like the father who knows that the time must soon arrive when he must leave his children, and is anxious to establish them in the faith on which his own hopes depend; so St. Peter delivers his parting testimony, which may live after him, and be remembered when he is gone. Moses had done the same. God had revealed to him, “Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers.” And knowing this, Moses set the example which Peter follows: he provided that his laws should be imprinted on the hearts of the Israelites with all the solemnity which a dying command could give. (Deut. xxxi. 28.) “Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their

ears, and call heaven and earth to witness against them." In the same spirit the apostle employs the time yet remaining to him, and *stirs them up by putting them in remembrance, knowing that shortly he must fulfil the prophecy which foretold his death. As the Lord Jesus Christ had shewed him.* (John xxi. 18.) "When thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thine hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God." Perhaps, too, a special notice had been given him, as was given to Paul,¹ that this event was now nigh at hand. *Shortly*, he says, *I must put off this my tabernacle.* The tent must be taken down, in which he was now dwelling: the tabernacle of his body in which his soul lodged. Removal is no strange thing, to one who has been long used to dwell in tents. And to Peter, who for more than thirty years had daily hazarded his life in the cause of Christ, it was no surprise to be informed that the time of his departure was approaching. It was, however, a reason why he should use the present opportunity. He *stirs them up by putting them in remembrance*; and he records his own personal knowledge and recollections for the benefit of future ages.

15. *Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.*

16. *For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 6.

17. *For he received from God the Father honour 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.*

18. *And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.*

Peter was well aware that there would "come in the last days scoffers," who would ascribe the history of the Lord Jesus to man's invention: treat it as a *cunningly devised fable*. To this he opposes the testimony of his own senses. They say that Jesus was but a man: had no claim to be described as "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." *We were eyewitnesses to his majesty*. "He was transfigured before us: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light."² They say again, that he took upon himself an authority to which he had no claim. *We heard the voice which came from heaven, confirming his authority. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*³ And therefore you, and those who come after you, may know the certainty of the things which ye have believed.

The Gospel rests on facts. And if a fact is properly authenticated at first, it is as certain at the end of a long chain of witnesses as at the beginning. Nothing ought to weaken belief except a break in the chain. We may compare it to electric power conveyed along a wire. The wire may be of indefinite length: the extremity far out of our sight: but if the shock is felt, we are sure that at the extremity there is a battery which causes it. So we may be certain of the facts of all well-authenticated

² Matt. xvii. 2.

³ Ib. 5.

history: and no history is so well authenticated as the history recorded in the Scriptures. What Peter saw and heard, he related to others who did not see or hear: those others repeated the same to their own generation; and every successive generation since has handed down the truth, so that it is as sure to us as it was to the scattered disciples to whom Peter wrote. The chain of testimony is unbroken: no link is wanting: and we may be as convinced as they were that *we have not followed cunningly devised fables*, when we have believed in *the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*. To encourage his apostles, and enable them to encourage others, the Lord assumed the glory of that majesty, and received that testimony from God which Peter saw and heard *in the holy mount*. And now after more than thirty years he makes use of the testimony for the purpose which it was given to serve. He records the impression fixed upon his own mind, that he may fix it on the minds of others. It is the testimony of one who knew that *he must shortly put off* his earthly tabernacle; and we are accustomed to give especial credit to such testimony. But it is more; it is the declaration of a man who was not merely soon to die, but to die in attestation of the faith which he was affirming. And this witness declares, that he beheld the glory of the Lord Jesus, the glory as of "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

On such testimony we believe. And our prayer should be, that our lives and our faith may agree; so that we too may hereafter behold his glory, "that glory which he had with the Father before the world

was;”⁴ not, like the apostles on the holy mount, for a short and transient glimpse, but for ever and ever. His promise is no less ; and to as many as receive it, and believe in his name, his promise will be fulfilled.

LECTURE XLV.

THE NATURE AND EFFECT OF PROPHECY.

2 PETER i. 19—21.

19. *We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.*

St. Peter had before said, speaking of the things related concerning the Lord Jesus, “This glory we saw, this voice we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.”

To him, and to all who had this testimony of their senses, nothing more sure could be offered, nothing could be made clearer. We cannot be made more sure of anything, than of what “our eyes have seen and our hands handled.” Why then does he write, *We have the more sure word of prophecy?* More sure to those whom he was addressing: more sure to all future ages. To these, a prophecy declaring

⁴ John xvii. 24.

before things happen what things shall happen, is the most convincing of all miracles. When, for example, our Lord said to his disciples, (Mark xi. 2,) "Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat: loose him, and bring him. And if any man say unto you, why do ye this? say ye, that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither." When all these circumstances turned out as he had foretold, it must have been to them a clearer proof than even the miracles they were daily beholding, that he who directed them was God. That which they saw on the following day, might well cause them to exclaim with wonder, "Lord, how soon is the fig-tree withered away!"¹ That which they were constantly witnessing gave good reason for the words, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!"² But it was a still surer proof of divine knowledge to foretell a chain of circumstances which no one could contrive or bring together. The finding of a colt, and that colt tied, at the entrance of the village, at a place where two ways met; the owner ready to yield him up to strangers, who said that the Lord had need of him:—all these circumstances turning out as had been foretold, could prove nothing less than that he who foretold them had power over the circumstances.

And of this nature is the *sure word of prophecy*.
To which, says the apostle, ye do well that ye take

¹ Mark xi. 21.

² Matt. viii. 27.

heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.

Prophecy, till fulfilled, gives little light. We see that it is there, as we see *a light shining in a dark place*; but the place is still obscure. Such was that passage in the prophet Isaiah, which the Ethiopian was reading, (Acts viii. 27,) as he sat in his chariot returning from Jerusalem. "The place which he read was this; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away; and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth." There was reason to say, "How can I understand this? I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet? of himself, or of some other man?" "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus:"—showed him how all this, and much more which is revealed in the prophet Isaiah, was accomplished in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ: whose generation was a mystery; to whom in his humiliation judgment was denied; who "when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not:" whose life was taken from the earth,³ when "for the transgression of his people he was stricken," when "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Thus the *place* was no longer *dark*; the light became strong and clear. The inquirer was convinced. He perceived the work of God, who had described seven hundred years before what had lately been transacted at Jerusalem. It is as if we should see

³ "Cut off out of the land of the living." Isa. liii. 8.

a curious lock, made intricate with many wards, so that, after long trial, no key can be found to fit it. At last a stranger arrives, and produces a key, which so agrees with the lock as to turn one after another all its various parts. We cannot then doubt but the inventor of the lock and the master of the key are in partnership, and concerned together. And just so it was that the birth and ministry and death of Jesus fitted the words of Isaiah's prophecy, and showed that God had first caused the history to be written, and then to be fulfilled.

The effect upon the Ethiopian's mind was manifest. He at once exclaims: "Sir, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

Thus the *day dawned*; the *day-star arose*; and not like that planet, merely to be seen, and not felt: but *arose in the heart*, and filled it with the warmth of eager zeal: he will not delay a moment to secure a share in that redemption which *the sure word of prophecy* had foretold, to seek an interest in that Redeemer on whose history the light had now shone so brightly. And Peter admonishes that all should do the same: should *take heed to prophecy*; that by it their hearts may be assured and comforted, their faith directed, strengthened, and confirmed. For such was the purpose for which prophecy was written, the benefit which it is meant to offer.

20. *Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.*

21. *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.*

As the prophecy is not the work of man, so neither is the interpretation of prophecy. The Holy Spirit gave it: the Holy Spirit must explain it. It is not of *private interpretation*:⁴ the mystery cannot be unfolded by any man's private notions or conjectures; it must wait for explanation from its Author.

There was found, for instance, a prediction in Malachi, (iv. 5,) "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

The scribes had given to this a *private interpretation*; that the prophet Elijah, in his own person, must appear again upon earth before He should come, who was to redeem Israel." When Jesus declared to his apostles that he was that Redeemer, they replied to him, "Why then say the scribes, that Elijah must first come?"⁵ The real interpretation was given by the Holy Ghost, who had before dictated the words of Malachi, when the angel declared to Zacharias, that the son who was born to him in his old age should be "called the prophet of the Highest; should "go before God in the spirit and power of Elijah, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."⁶

The Lord Jesus also warned his disciples against those who should make the Scripture a matter of *private interpretation*, and adapt to their own purposes the promises of deliverance, and the expectation of a Saviour. "Take heed," he said, (Matt. xxiv. 4,) "that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and

⁴ ἐπιλυσεως, solution. ⁵ Matt. xvii. 10. ⁶ Luke i. 17 and 76.

shall deceive many.” “ Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo here is Christ, or there : believe it not.” These would speak *after the will of man* ; to serve themselves, or to gratify their own imaginations. *Prophecy came not by the will of man*, and cannot be interpreted according to man’s will. Both the prophecy and its accomplishment are the work of the Holy Ghost.

Such is prophecy ; dimly shining till the full light come. *To which ye do well that ye take heed.* Ye do well to establish and settle your minds by the word of prophecy. But observe for what reason. *Till the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.* Not for mere interest or curiosity. Though it is indeed a worthy subject of interest, none more so, to trace the minute circumstances belonging to a scriptural fact, belonging, for instance, to the birth of Christ, or afterwards those attending his death, and to see how they were all marked down before ; and there remained, obscure and inexplicable, till the event, like a ray of sun, was cast upon them. But the purpose must be kept in view ; that “ the light of the knowledge of the glory of God ” may shine in our hearts, “ in the face of Jesus Christ ;”⁷ that we may see why Jesus was the subject of prophecy, and why he fulfilled all that was written of him ; namely, to “ bring us to God :” to make us the children of God, and exalt us to everlasting life. To admire the prophecy, and confess its truth ; and yet to neglect Him of whom the prophets testified ; this would be to discover the key and unlock the treasure, and yet to secure no benefit from what we found. This would be to see

⁷ 2 Cor. iv. 6.

and admire the light: and yet to live as if we remained in darkness. The *day-star must arise in our hearts*, for the purpose which it is intended to fulfil: to direct us to Christ, as “the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world:”⁸ to comfort us under the clouds of adversity and sickness: nay, to cheer us through our worst and latest trials, that even if we “pass through the valley of the shadow of death, we may fear no evil.” For, for this has “the day-spring from on high visited us;” “for this was the Son of God manifested,” “to guide our feet into the way of peace.”⁹

LECTURE XLVI.

THE CERTAINTY OF DIVINE JUDGMENTS.

2 PETER ii. 1—9.

1. *But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.*

2. *And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.*

3. *And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.*

St. Peter had spoken of prophets—*holy men who*

⁸ John i. 9.

⁹ Luke i. 79.

spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But not all had been so inspired, who took upon themselves to prophesy. Base coin had been intermixed with the pure gold. *There had been false prophets also,* who deceived the Jews of old. Evil men spoke as Satan prompted them. For the sake of their own advantage they feigned what was pleasing, instead of uttering what was true; like those who flattered Ahab, and excited him to go and meet his death at Ramoth-Gilead.¹

So likewise it would be in the church of Christ. *Even so there shall be false teachers among you.* They shall insinuate themselves *privily*, concealing the nature of their doctrines, but really *denying the Lord*, who gave himself for them, and whom they pretend to serve; having their own ends in view; *making merchandise of you with feigned words through covetousness*, as they who sold Ahab to his enemies. Many too should *follow their pernicious ways*: and *the truth* itself would suffer: the false disciples of Christ would bring a reproach upon his name.

These defied the judgments of God. Peter reminds them of these judgments; reminds all, not to presume upon his forbearance. Scripture furnishes awful examples, how such offenders *bring upon themselves swift destruction*: how their doom has been long determined in the sentence of God against the wicked, nay, long since pronounced in prophecy,² so that their *judgment lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.* For though he is "merciful and long-suffering, not willing that any should perish;"³ yet, towards presumptuous transgressors,

¹ Kings xxii. 1-7.² Jude iv.³ Numb. xiv. 18.

and especially against those who cause others to offend, “our God is a consuming fire.”⁴

4. *For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment ;*

5. *And spared not the old world, but spared Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly ;*

6. *And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly ;*

7. *And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked :*

8. *(For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds ;)*

9. *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.*

Here the teachers of false doctrine, and the followers of false doctrine, are alike reminded of the danger that awaited them. Every wilful sinner goes upon the presumption of impunity ; that God careth not for it ; “ he will not do good, neither will he do evil.”⁵ This is contrary to all example of what God has actually done. Before our world was formed, we are told of *angels that sinned*,⁶ and kept not their first estate. *God spared them not*. It is the part of mercy to spare. But there are times when mercy cannot spare, and justice must prevail. So it was then. *God cast them down into hell, and*

⁴ Deut. iv. 24. Heb. xii. 29.

⁵ Zeph. i. 12.

⁶ Jude vi.

delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.

Again in the days of Noah, when “all flesh had corrupted itself, and “the earth was filled with violence,”⁷ men “regarded not the work of the Lord, neither considered the operation of his hands.” They were not without warning: *Noah, a preacher of righteousness*, exhorted them to “seek the Lord while he might be found; to call upon him whilst he was near:” he provided a way of refuge for himself, and admonished others to follow his example. But to no purpose: they persisted in their ways, as if the world was theirs, and its Maker had no power. But God displayed his power. He *spared them not*. They had argued that he would spare them. *He spared them not, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly*; and so left a proof to all future ages that he “will by no means clear the guilty.”⁸

Another signal example was furnished by *the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha*. The sin of those cities was “very grievous:” and the Lord did not suffer the inhabitants to await the common death of all men, but, *turning their cities into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow*. These too had been under “strong delusion:” they would not be persuaded of their danger. (Gen. xix. 14.) Lot, as the angel commanded—the righteous Lot, who had been *long vexed with the filthy communication of the wicked*, he went out, “and spake unto his sons-in-law, who married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this

⁷ Gen. vi. 12, 13.

⁸ Ex. xxxiv. 7.

city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law." They treated his warning, as the old world had treated Noah's preaching: as an idle tale. But Lot had no sooner reached the place of safety which the Lord, "being merciful to him," had prepared, than brimstone and fire rained upon those cities out of heaven; "and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace."

All these things are left unto us as examples: showing that *the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.* For such is the object of this passage: a double object: first, to affirm the certainty of God's judgments: to leave an assurance to the false teachers who should hereafter arise and trouble the church, that there is "a vengeance of eternal fire," there is "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul of man that doeth evil." This Peter here declares: and holds up before us as proofs a host of angels, natures superior to ours, cast down from their high estate, and *delivered into chains of darkness*: whole cities turned into a monument of divine wrath: nay, the inhabitants of the world itself, overwhelmed by the word of his mouth and the blast of his displeasure.

But the same examples also prove that "the Lord knoweth them that are his," and delivers them from the calamities by which the wicked are destroyed. In all cases where false teachers prevail, those who continue steadfast to the truth are harassed with much temptation. They become the objects of persecution, and must needs be supported and comforted. These examples convey much encouragement. God

spared Noah, the eighth person: he delivered him, and seven members of his family with him: enclosed him safe in the vessel which he had built, before he suffered the rain to fall, and the fountains of the great deep to be broken up. So when destruction was hanging over Sodom and Gomorrha, the Lord knew how to deliver that just man, who, *dwelling among them, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds*. He sent his angel, who should lay hold upon the hand of Lot, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters—with these remarkable words: “Haste thou, escape to Zoar: for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither.”⁹

So it will be at the end of the world. The Lord will “send forth his angels, and gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity.”¹ And then will appear the reward of faithfulness, the deliverance of the godly. As when the deluge was raging, and the waters were increasing more and more, great, we may well suppose, must have been the terror, and loud the lamentation. Noah alone would be found in a state of safety and of peace: as far as concerned himself, in peace: he was in the ark: no false persuasion had diverted him from it, no temptation allured him out of it: and now, what he had prepared in faith, and entered in faith, rewarded him with the security which belongs to all who believe in God’s word.

So on the judgment-day. They who have continued in their sins, deceiving their own souls, and abusing the grace of God, and they who have led

⁹ See Gen. xix. 16—22.

¹ Matt. xiii. 41.

others *into pernicious ways, through covetousness, making merchandise* of their souls: these will find, too late, that *their judgment lingereth not*, that “the terrors of the Lord” are not vain terrors. The faithful disciple, whom no false teachers have been able to pervert, he alone will be calm and peaceful. Like Noah, “warned of God of things not seen as yet, he has prepared an ark to the saving of his house:” this ark he has entered, and in this ark he has remained: and the storm which wrecks an unrepenting world, will carry him over the face of the waters to the haven where he would be, and transport him to a kingdom “where is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.”

LECTURE XLVII.

DISORDERLY AND CORRUPT DISTURBERS OF THE CHURCH CONDEMNED.

2 PETER ii. 10—16.

10. *But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.*

11. *Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.*

Among those who were bringing upon themselves destruction, those before spoken of as *reserved unto*

the day of judgment to be punished, St. Peter especially mentions some who even at that early age troubled the church of Christ. They had embraced a religion of restraint and self-denial ; subduing the flesh to the spirit. But these *walked after the flesh*, fulfilling its desires. Whilst they so walked, all that were rulers in the church, all that had authority, must be against them. So they set themselves against authority, and *despised government*. Resistance strengthened their self-will. For it is with the human heart as with a stream of water. We hardly know its force till we attempt to stem it. A river may seem to flow so gently, that you scarcely perceive its current. But no sooner is a barrier raised and a restraint put upon the current, than you see its force by its resistance : it overleaps all bounds. So it is with the corrupt heart. Suffer it to follow its own way, its natural course, and all is smooth and easy. Oppose it with the restraints of the gospel, and its violence breaks forth. “ Rulers are a terror to evil works.” These, being evil, “ were afraid of the same :” had reason to fear the censure of just authority, and so being *presumptuous and self-willed*, they reviled *the dignities* which were above them, and railed against the powers which should control them. Peter contrasts this with what we know of heavenly beings. We read of no like instance of violence in them. We read in Scripture of angels pitying men, warning men, desiring their good, and ministering to it : but we do not read of their accusing men.¹ It is left for Satan to be the “ accuser of the brethren.” *Whereas angels*, “ who

¹ Rev. xii. 10.

have kept their first estate," *who are greater in power and might*, who might have more claim than weak and impotent man, to use bold language, *bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.*

12. *But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;*

13. *And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day-time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings whilst they feast with you;*

14. *Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:*

15. *Which have forsaken the right way, and have gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor,* who loved the wages of unrighteousness;*

16. *But he was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet.*

We hardly expect to find connected with the church of Christ, or professing to belong to it, such characters as these *false teachers* are here described. "There was *violence* and *presumption* among the followers of him who was "meek and lowly in heart," who would not "strive," whose "voice was not heard in the streets." There were *spots* in the polished surface, *blemishes* among those who were taught to "go on unto perfection." There were those who *rioted in the day-time*, lost to all shame: who *sported themselves with their own deceivings*, disgracing the "feasts of charity," the loving meet-

* Bosor is called in Numb. xxii. 5, Beor. The Hebrew, Beor, is the Chaldee, Bosor.

ings of the Christians. There were those who *could not cease from sin*, whilst bearing the name of him who died for sin; taught to be “pure in heart,” yet having “an evil eye;” *beguiling unstable souls*, whom they ought to establish and settle in the faith; *exercised with covetous practices*, when they ought to “have overcome the world.” This seems strange. It shows that which is “within, in the heart of man.” It shows the strength of natural corruption. And it was all foreseen by Him who knew of what his church would be composed. He speaks of the intruding guest, who should come in, “not having the wedding garment.” He speaks of “tares” which should grow up among “the wheat,” to the surprise of those who saw them. “Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? An enemy hath done this.” Satan would assail the subjects of a kingdom which was raised against himself, and “deceive many:” and would injure the fair beauty of the church, against which he could not finally prevail.

It had been the same in former times. Peter looks back, and finds a like example of depravity. So does Jude. His short epistle is chiefly employed in exposing the same evil men as Peter here exposes. He paints them in the like colours, and condemns them with the same severe condemnation. Jude compares them to Corah and his company.² Peter to Balaam, who *loved the wages of unrighteousness*. These, like him, having the world in their hearts, took the name of God in their

² Numbers xvi.

mouths. That these had the world in their hearts, is plain from the sins which they are here charged with practising. And Balaam had the world in his heart: he *loved the wages of unrighteousness*; and nothing but the irresistible power of God prevented his accepting the reward which the king of Moab offered him, if he would curse the people of God. *The dumb ass rebuked the madness of the prophet*, whom Satan was "leading captive at his will."

The apostle has great cause to term characters like these *spots and blemishes*. They mar the beauty of the church, and injure its effect. They give occasion to "the enemies of God to blaspheme:" who rejoice, when any who once seemed to have escaped from error, are found in practice no better than themselves. "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure."³ St. Peter's object is to show this. The Lord knoweth how to distinguish between the hypocrite and the true disciple. The tares and the wheat "grow together until the harvest:" when the Lord will send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the presence of the Father.⁴ Though there is hypocrisy and apostasy to be found, there is also to be found sincerity and faithfulness: though there are some that fall away, there are others who remain stedfast unto the end. And not one of these is forgotten before God. As he preserved Noah, as he delivered Lot, so will he deliver all those who in the midst of a wicked and a perverse generation still keep themselves pure. But these examples are

³ 2 Tim. ii. 19.

⁴ Matt. xiii. 41—43.

left for our instruction. Have there been such evils in the church? "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall:" and let every one "that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity:" lest he, like those of old, should bring destruction upon himself, and perish in his corruption.

LECTURE XLVIII.

THE DREADFUL CONDITION OF THOSE WHO FALL AWAY.

2 PETER ii. 17—22.

17. *These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.*

18. *For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.*

19. *While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.*

It appears that one method by which the false teachers of whom Peter is here speaking seduced the disciples who listened to them, was by *promising them liberty*. Perhaps they abused the mercy of God for this purpose, and pretended "that the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free," is

liberty to sin. Seducers of this kind *speaking great swelling words of vanity*: boast of being superior to the restraints by which weaker men are governed. And they find in human nature too much that is easily allured, and ready to be betrayed.

And yet what Peter has here written is most true. *Whilst they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption.* Calling themselves free, they are of all men the most wretched slaves. *For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.* And these are overcome by the power of sin, when sin has become a habit. Against reason, against conscience, against conviction, against better resolutions, the sinner is hurried on: till at last, perhaps, these cease to trouble him, and Satan leads him captive at his will. But this is not *liberty*. And those who are unhappily allured to follow it, soon find that they have left “the fountain of living waters” for that which has nothing to give them in return. They to whose party they have come and joined themselves, are *wells without water*: empty wells, which afford nothing to refresh or satisfy: to follow them, is to follow a cloud carried here and there by tempests, and not falling to refresh the ground, but leading to “the blackness of darkness for ever.”¹

20. *For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.*

¹ So Jude 12. “Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds.” Prov. xxv. 14. “Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift, is like clouds and wind without rain.”

21. *For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.*

22. *But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.²*

“A man shall be judged according to that he hath, and not according to that he hath not.”³ That servant which knew his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, “shall be beaten with many stripes.” Therefore it is, that *the latter end* of one who turns from the way of righteousness which once he knew, *is worse than the beginning*. It is worse, because he has sinned against more light and knowledge. It is worse, because there is less hope of his repentance. *He had escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* He had heard the Lord’s message, “Take my yoke upon you.” He had been told that “the wages of sin is death:” that God has revealed a day “in which he will judge the world in righteousness.” And in obedience to this, he had left the ways of darkness, and entered upon the path of righteousness. And now, with knowledge of the truth; having acquaintance with heavenly things: with the end brought full into view, to which sin leads, and to which righteousness leads:—*he has turned from the holy commandment delivered to him*, and “forsaken his own mercy,” and counted “himself unworthy of

² Prov. xxvi. 11. “As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool to his own folly.”

³ 2 Cor. viii. 12; Luke xii. 47.

eternal life," to which he has preferred *the pollution of the world*. Is it not worse with him, than with the ignorant? Is there not both less excuse for his ungodliness, and less hope of his repentance? We address one who is a stranger to the truth, who has gone blindly on in the path which others were treading, and never stopped to think of the end to which it will carry him: we warn him of the precipice on which he stands, and of the *mist of darkness* below: and we tell of Him who came to deliver from this danger, and guide into the way of peace and safety the steps of all who follow him. It may be that the Lord will open his heart, that he shall attend to the words spoken, and smite upon his breast and say, "Verily, there was but a step between me and death!" I thank my God, that he hath given me warning.

But what can we say to those, who having escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour, are *again entangled therein and overcome*? They have "done despite unto the Spirit of God."⁴ They have looked into the land of promise, and have turned their backs upon it, bringing a bad report, as if it were not worth the pains of seeking. After having known the Lord, they have turned away, and "walked no more with him." So that the condemnation which he uttered against the Jewish people, applies to them: "If I had not done amongst them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin:" comparatively, there would have been excuse for them:

⁴ Heb. x. 26.

“ but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.”⁵

Thus is *the latter end worse than the beginning*. Our Lord had shown the same, had taught us that Satan will not fail to use all his means, that he may draw back unto perdition those who were once escaped from error: and that the heart must be guarded with careful diligence, lest he find it empty, unfortified, and prepared to receive him again. The consequence is told in awful terms. “ Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself: and they enter in, and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”⁶

The Gospel, however, leaves none without hope. A man may fall from grace: that is, “ the righteous man may turn away from his righteousness, and do according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth.”⁷ And if he does so fall away, and “ die in his impenitence:” in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.” But he need not die in his trespass. He may return again to the God whom he has forsaken. The promise is confined by no limits, and restrained by no exceptions, which declares,⁸ “ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” When Simon the magician showed that he was still *the servant of corruption*, though he had submitted to the ordinance of baptism, Peter warned him of his dangerous state. “ I

⁵ John xv. 24.

⁶ Luke xi. 26.

⁷ Ezek. xviii. 24.

⁸ 1 John i. 9.

perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.”⁹ Like the brute animal, thou hast returned to thine old nature, and to the habits that are too congenial to thee. But he does not leave him in despair. “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.” As the prophet had said before, “Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions: so iniquity shall not be your ruin. For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord your God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.”¹⁰

LECTURE XLIX.

THE SCOFFER AND UNBELIEVER REFUTED.

2 PETER iii. 1—8.

1. *This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:*

2. *That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:*

3. *Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,*

4. *And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*

The Holy Spirit, by whose guidance the Scrip-

⁹ Acts viii. 18—24.

¹⁰ Ezek. xviii. 30—32.

tures were written, has warned us against every danger. Many evils have beset the church in its different periods, and have led away multitudes: but none without warning. Here we are told of *scoffers*, who should *come in the last days*, (in after or latter times,) *walking after their own lusts*. It is not by nature that man is led to walk after any other law than that of his own desires. There is always, therefore, a tendency to recede: a disposition to find some ground on which we may depart from the law of God, and become a law to ourselves. Unbelief furnishes such ground: prevents the effect which Scripture is intended to produce upon the heart and life. Scripture says, "Watch:" "be ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh:"¹ cometh "to judge the world in righteousness:" to bring "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." Then unbelief steps in, and asks, *Where is the promise of his coming?* The patriarchs have died: the fathers of the church have died: the apostles and teachers of our faith have fallen asleep: *and all things remain as they were from the beginning of the creation.*

St. Peter meets this objection. He *stirs up their minds*, by calling to their remembrance things of old, and what had taken place in ancient time. He reminds them how God had acted in the case of the deluge. He had first declared his purpose; he then for a while delayed his purpose; and at last he fulfilled his purpose of destroying the whole world

¹ Matt. xxiv. 44.

by water. He will, in the end, with equal certainty destroy the present world by fire.

5. *For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water :*

6. *Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished :*

7. *But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*

These scoffers argue, *All things continue as they were.* But so, replies St. Peter, the antediluvians might have argued. God had revealed his design : (Gen. vi. 17 :) “ Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh wherein is the breath of life from under heaven : and everything that is in the earth shall die.” Those who heard this warning might deny that the world could be thus overwhelmed. They, like later scoffers, might be *willingly ignorant* : ready to deceive themselves : and refuse to believe that the word of God which had “ set up the pillars ” of the world, might take them down. “ *By the word of God* the waters which were under the firmament were divided from the waters that were above the firmament.” The earth, though surrounded by water, *stood out of the water* : to which bounds were set that it should not pass. And how long might the heavens fall in rain, before the hills should be covered ? So man might suppose : and so perhaps they did persuade themselves, during the hundred

and twenty years whilst the ark was preparing, and Noah, "the preacher of righteousness," was in vain endeavouring to alarm their fears and bring them to repentance. The scoffers of the day would argue, Since this dreamer began to threaten, *all things continue as they were from the beginning*. But at the appointed time "all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened:"² *whereby the earth that then was, being overflowed by water, perished*. "All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died."

So vainly should we suppose that because God had laid the foundations of the earth firm and unshaken, they should never be removed. Whilst men say, "Peace and safety, sudden destruction may come upon them unawares:" as it came upon those who lived in the days of Noah, and were buying and selling, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, "till the flood came, and swept them all away." The delay of God's judgments is no reason why they should never be fulfilled. There has been indeed a promise (Gen. ix. 11) that "there shall not any more be a flood to destroy the earth." But there is also an assurance, (Matt. xxiv. 30,) that "all the tribes of the earth shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory:" that "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, (2 Thess. i. 7,) in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." So

² Gen. vii. 11.

that *the heavens and earth that now are, by the word of God are kept in store, reserved unto fire*. The old world was surrounded with water : *stood out of the water and in the water* : and that by which it stood together, proved the element and instrument of its destruction, when God permitted : so that *the world which then was, being overflowed with water, perished*. The world that now is, is *reserved unto fire* : the materials of which are constantly beneath our feet, and are only restrained from bursting forth by the will of the Creator. Let him speak the word, and in a moment “the heavens shall pass away, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”³

Thus much God has clearly revealed. The season when it shall take place he has not disclosed. “Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”⁴ The scoffers argue, that because it has been long delayed, it will never be. They know little of the nature of the God whom they despise, or of the eternity with which they are trifling.

8. *But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

A day, a year, is much to short-lived man. But what is it in the counsels of Him who is from everlasting? A drop of water is much to the parched and thirsty traveller : but what is it in the bound-

³ See ver. 10.

⁴ Matt. xxiv. 37.

less ocean? Yet even that single drop is more to the ocean, than a thousand years are to eternity.

That single drop may be life to the traveller. And the one short day which is given to man, is given him that he may provide for eternity. Whenever the day of the Lord shall arrive, however long it may be delayed, it will arrive too soon for the impenitent and unbelieving. Whenever it arrive, however soon, it will not be too soon for those who, like Noah, have “prepared an ark for the saving of their house:”⁵ and who, when their Lord cometh, are found watching.

LECTURE L.

THE PROPER EFFECT OF FAITH UPON THE LIFE AND HABITS.

2 PETER iii. 9—12.

9. *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

“All things continue as they were.” The Lord delayeth his coming. This *men count slackness*. The scoffer uses it as a pretext for “walking after his own lusts;” and even the servants of God, perhaps, are impatient for their redemption. God,

⁵ Heb. xi. 7.

meanwhile, is exercising his mercy. He is dealing with the world as he dealt with the barren tree in the parable, when he let it alone another year, to see if it would bring forth fruit.¹ Every year which is added to the life of an ungodly man, is an instance of this forbearance. He may still "call upon the name of the Lord, and be saved." And in the same manner every year which is added to the duration of this our world, gives fresh space for repentance. Every year brings multitudes to repentance, who, if the day of the Lord had been hastened, could have found "no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." Many, unhappily, abuse this long-suffering, as they abuse every other token of God's goodness. Meanwhile "the Lord waiteth," and fulfilleth the counsels of his own will, till the season shall at length arrive of which we are forewarned, but of which "no man knoweth."

10. *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*

11. *Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,*

12. *Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ?*

This is a great question, which the apostle here puts to our consciences. *Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved*, which is part of the truths which ye have received from God's word, *what manner of*

¹ Luke xiii. 6.

persons ought ye to be? He appeals to our reason, to our understanding: and leaves us to determine for ourselves.

Are we to be as those, who have nothing to do with this present world? That might be at first supposed. *Since all these things are to be dissolved, since we are looking for and hasting to the day of God,* how trifling are all the concerns of life! Let us abstract ourselves from them altogether. Such has been the idea of some; some have even acted on it: have retired into woods and deserts, or shut themselves up within walls and cells; thinking that in this way they might best be delivered from this present evil world, and forgetting that the worst danger of it, they had within them, and carried about with them, and could not escape from. Something of this kind seems to have arisen in the minds of the Thessalonian disciples, when the vast interests of eternity were first disclosed to them, and came upon them as a new thing. St. Paul was obliged to warn them against such error. “We hear that there are some among you which walk disorderly, working not at all:”² having laid aside the business of life, under pretence of providing for the life to come. “Now them that are such we command and exhort by the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.” And again, he gives directions to Titus, “Let ours”—our christian people,—“be careful to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.”³

For, in truth, it is by the faithful performance of

² 2 Thess. iii. 11.

³ Tit. iii. 14.

the duties of our several stations here, that we do prepare for eternity. The world is our place of trial. And the Lord himself said in his last prayer for his apostles, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world; but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."⁴ And yet, though not of the world, they were not to be taken out of the world: they were to remain in the world, doing the work appointed for them, being "not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," and preserved by his grace from the corruption which surrounded them.

If, however, on the one hand, we are not to be as persons who have *nothing to do* with the world that now is; neither, on the other hand, should we be as persons who have *only to do* with the present world. And such would be the notion we should form concerning men in general, judging merely from what we see around us.

This is not consistent, not reasonable. So Peter here intimates. It would be consistent and reasonable for those who believe in no revelation, to consider present things and those alone. It is natural for those who hold that all ends with this earthly life, to argue, Let us enjoy this earthly life. If, as St. Paul says, in this life only we have hope, let us adopt the heathen maxim; "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."⁵ But it is not reason to act in the same way, with principles directly opposite. It is not reason to say, Let us enjoy ourselves to-day; for to-morrow we must be

⁴ John xvii. 15, 16.

⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 32.

summoned to appear before God. It is not reason to say, Let us walk after the desire of our heart and the sight of our eyes; for, "For all this God will call us into judgment." It is not reason to say, Seeing that death is at hand, and judgment is before the door; therefore let us live as if we had made a covenant with death, and there was no Judge to summon us before him. There is no reason in this. And the apostle knows that we must allow it, when plainly set before us; and merely asks, *Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be?*

We ought to be as persons, whose first and chief object is "the kingdom of God and his righteousness." We ought not to pursue even the most needful, or the most innocent, or the worthiest, or the dearest earthly thing, as if that were the chief concern. All other things must be thought of and attended to, according as they bear upon our eternal state; nothing must be allowed to interfere with the one great business, the securing our salvation.

To speak, for example, of two things which in some form or other most generally occupy the world, —wealth and pleasure.

And first of wealth. Men are not forbidden to improve their fortunes. Each man is at liberty to rise in his station, whether that be a high or low one; to better his condition. So to do, is the natural, i. e. the providential effect of the habits which all ought to follow: of industry, prudence, temperance. Many of the good men recorded in Scripture were rich: nay, grew rich in the service of God. Not to mention the elder patriarchs of the Jewish

nation ; Joseph rose from the condition of a captive slave, to be the second person of the land. Scripture nowhere condemns him for so rising. Daniel, who was a servant in the king's palace, was raised to wealth and dignity. "The king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over all the province of Babylon."⁶

This then may be : a man may have many blessings here below, and yet his affections may remain fixed on things above : the fear of God may still prevail in his heart ; as we know it did in Joseph : the glory of God may still be the chief thought, as we know it was with Daniel. Yet there is great danger lest it be otherwise : and if it is otherwise, and men *will be* rich, richer, i. e. than they are, serving mammon instead of God ; then they incur the condemnation of the prophet, who was inspired to say, "Woe unto them that add house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place ; that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth."⁷ These were treating the world as if it was their own, was made for them, and they and it were to last for ever : not as if it were a land they were to pass through "as strangers and pilgrims," leading to an eternal inheritance beyond.

Then, as to pleasure. Men are not forbidden to enjoy the comforts which the bounty of God has left to his unworthy creatures, and which he has allowed to survive the sin which ruined man, and marred his blessings. What is forbidden, is to seek that as pleasure, which God has pronounced to be sin : what is forbidden, is to make the pleasures of

⁶ Dan. ii. 48.

⁷ Isa. v. 8.

life the *object*, the *pursuit* of life : and in the enjoyment of the good, to forget or offend the Giver of the good.

Here, again, we have the prophet's warning : " Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, that continue until night, till wine inflame them : and the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe and wine are in their feasts : but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands."⁸

With persons of this sort, with both these classes, we might invert the apostle's reasoning; and might suppose them to argue : Seeing that these things shall never be dissolved, and we shall possess our wealth for ever, let us seek to add coin to coin, and field to field. Seeing that life is given us for no other purpose than that we should take our ease, eat, drink, and be merry ; let us follow our heart's desire. But if we, as Christians, believe differently ; let us reason differently ; and if we reason differently, let us act in agreement with our principles : and since we know that *all these things are to be dissolved*, let our present lives be passed *in all holy conversation and godliness*.

And the proper conclusion is, that such ought to be our daily conversation, our habitual manner of living, as the Lord would approve, if this day were to be *the day of his coming*, if this night *the heavens being on fire were to be dissolved, and the elements to melt with fervent heat*. For the word of God, whilst it tells us what shall be dissolved, tells us also what

⁸ Isa. v. 11.

shall never be dissolved. "Heaven and earth shall pass away;" "but he that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever."⁹

LECTURE LI.

HEAVEN THE ABODE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

2 PETER iii. 13.

13. *Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

"The heavens," we are assured, "shall be dissolved; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

Is it then the same with the righteous as with the wicked? With the Christian, as with the scoffer? With the faithful who persevere unto the end, as with the unstable who in time of temptation fall away? This is far from God's intention: and St. Peter does not fail to encourage the brethren by reminding them, that the day of destruction of the wicked is the day of salvation to the people of God. *Nevertheless, notwithstanding this revelation concerning the end of the world, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.* For "this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life."¹ This is the

⁹ 1 John ii. 17. See also Isa. li. 6.

¹ 1 John ii. 25.

hope set before us: this expectation has made us what we are, followers of Christ Jesus: that, as his followers, we may inherit his kingdom.

It is interesting and important to observe the way in which St. Peter describes the heavenly kingdom for which Christians look. He does not here speak of it as a place "where is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore;" he does not attempt to represent its glories, by figuring to our minds gates of pearl, and streets of gold: he does not even make mention of the absence of all sorrow, "where they shall hunger no more, not thirst any more, neither shall there be any more pain:"²—but he simply speaks of a new world, *wherein dwelleth righteousness*. He states this, and this alone, as if this were all, and this all-sufficient.

And truly, speaking thus, he speaks as one who had gone through the ranks of mankind, and the abodes of human nature, and had learnt what causes misery, and what real happiness consists in. He speaks as one who had entered into the recesses of his own heart, and had discovered what was needful to its peace: and then he describes heaven as a place *wherein dwelleth righteousness*.

This world would have been free from all calamity, if there had been no unrighteousness. If the heart of man had remained uncorrupt, all things else would have remained as they were at first pronounced by their Creator, who surveyed the works of his hands, "and behold, they were very good." With sin came death; came all the pain and woe that leads to death, and attends it. With sin came

² See Rev. vii. and xxi.

that blight upon the earth, from which labour and indigence and privation spring. And yet it is not in these—not in the severity of labour nor in the straits of poverty that real unhappiness consists: indeed under all the calamities and trials of life the pious and godly mind may be upheld: moral evil is the thorn which rankles in the side, and causes the wound which cannot be remedied or mitigated, till its source is removed.

I look (for example) to the twenty-seventh chapter of Genesis, and find one who is leaving his country and his home, his whole fortune and his sole companion the staff on which he leaned: a mother too, who loved him but too well, is forced to conquer nature and hasten his departure. This is one of the sore distresses of life: the separation of those who are dear to each other: the departure from the home we have known, and the country we have loved. If we trace this case of unhappiness to its cause, it arises from sin. It arises from the practice of deceit in one, and in the indulgence of revenge in another. Jacob is forced to fly, because he has supplanted his brother of his birthright: because Esau is waiting for an opportunity to slay him.

I look to the twenty-first chapter of the first book of Kings, and find the picture of a monarch who comes home to his house heavy and displeased, and lays him down upon his bed, and turns away his face, and will eat no bread. Here too is unhappiness. And here too is sin under another form: the form of covetousness. Ahab has been disappointed in his desire to possess Naboth's vineyard.

Again, I turn to the thirty-eighth Psalm, and read these words: "O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh by reason of thine anger: neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burthen, they are too heavy for me."

The complaint is from David. It is not pain, it is not poverty, it is not the loss of those dear to him, which cause these mournful words: he is grieving, because he acknowledges his transgressions, and his sin is ever before him. And what would these and such as these require, that their sorrow might be turned into joy, their mourning changed for peace? A nature which shall not sin: a nature which shall not be overcome by evil desires: a nature which shall not covet what God has not permitted: a nature which shall not be capable of envy, hatred, malice, and uncharitableness: a nature where the flesh shall not lust against the spirit, or a law in the members war against the law of the mind: a nature, in short, wherein *dwelleth righteousness*: dwelleth, not as now, a guest brought in, admitted into the heart, yet often finding itself a stranger, as one not in its native home: not as now, even at the best, soon disturbed as a bird from the resting place it has chosen, and forced to flee away; but where righteousness dwells as in its own birthplace.

Neither is it a man's own sinfulness alone which brings him unhappiness in this world. How much of what is suffered comes from the sin of others!

How many families are made miserable from the conduct of those who ought to be their stay and comfort ! What wretchedness did Jacob suffer from the wickedness of his children ! David, too ; was there any sorrow like the sorrow which he felt for Absalom ? St. Peter, like all the early Christians, knew much of this : so that if, as St. Paul writes, “ in this world only they had hope, they were of all men most miserable : ” reproached by their friends, cast off by their relations, despoiled of their goods, reviled, defamed, imprisoned, tormented : and this for the Gospel’s sake ; because they would be faithful to their God and Saviour. Who can wonder that Peter, who had suffered all this, and was writing to those who suffered it, should represent heaven as the place wherein none are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for therein *dwelleth righteousness* : “ there the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.”

This, says the apostle, is what *we look for*. We look for it according to divine promise. Even if there were no promise, we might look for it with hope : for whilst we see around us a vast multitude who do even as they list, neither fearing God nor regarding man ; yet we also see others who follow after holiness, and set God before them : and our reason forbids us to believe, that the righteous should be as the wicked : that God should make no “ difference between those who serve him, and those who serve him not.” But we have still firmer ground to stand upon : we have the assurance of the Son of God himself, that “ whosoever heareth his words, and doeth them, shall have eternal life : ” and

that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive such things as God has prepared for them that love him."

One reflection grows out of these words. Heaven is represented as the scene and abode of righteousness. In proportion, therefore, as we cultivate righteousness here, we anticipate the happiness of heaven. Heaven cannot be perfected here, because righteousness cannot be here perfect. But the nearer we approach to righteousness, the nearer we approach to that *new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

LECTURE LII.

PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD.

2 PETER iii. 14.

14. *Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.*

St. Peter had said, We know that the world shall be dissolved; but we look for something beyond. "We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." And thus he naturally comes to the end, the consequence, of such a belief and such an expectation. He who has prepared

for his people a kingdom of righteousness, is coming to receive into it as many as are found meet and ready. Take heed that *ye be ready*: not in a state of *enmity* with God into whose presence you are to enter, but at *peace* with him.

And surely, great as God is, "the High and Holy One, who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy:" it is a blessing to be thus informed, that, mean and unworthy as we are, we may yet be at peace with Him. And the way we know. "Being justified by faith,"—having received as true, and embraced for ourselves "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,"—"we have peace with God:" and may say with the aged Simeon in the temple, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word." Paul trusted to this reconciliation, when he wrote, "I desire to be found, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith."² I look for peace with God, not to anything in myself, but to the merits of the great Peacemaker.

It had not been always so with him. It was not so, when he set out from Jerusalem for Damascus, breathing enmity against Christ and the christian name. Had he then been summoned before God, he would not have been *found in peace*: for the only way of peace he was then refusing. But now he had obtained mercy, as the disciple of the Lord whom once he persecuted, the preacher of the faith which once he destroyed. And this may be the case with others also: who perhaps may

² Phil. iii. 9.

once—if not have opposed the truth—have neglected or despised it. They may “have been some time darkness,” who are now “light in the Lord:” who have now seen the suitableness of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, as meeting the case of sinful, sinning creatures like themselves: who have laid hold of the eternal life it offers, and fled for refuge to the shelter it affords: and therefore are at peace with God, whom they had offended, through Him who was delivered for their offences: who “died for their sins, and rose again for their justification.”

Thus you may be found of him in peace. But St. Peter adds, *without spot*. How *without spot?* with a nature of which Job asks, “What is man that he should be clean: or he that is born of woman, that he should be righteous?”² A nature of which Paul says—“I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.”

Without spot, only because the Christian, baptized in the faith of Christ, has “washed his robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” “He is purged,” as St. Peter expresses it, “from his old sins:” and his duty is, the business of his life, to keep himself pure. “He that is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” When Peter desired that washing, without which, the Lord assured him, no one had any part in Him: the answer was—“Ye are clean.”³ Ye have embraced the faith that is in me with sincerity and truth: and “ye are clean: ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified.”

² Job xv. 14. Rom. vii. 18.

³ John xiii. 10.

But this white robe may be stained and sullied. Any sin committed is a stain upon the white robe wherewith Christ clothes the Christian, when he presents him before the Father as a child of the covenant, as one who has obtained mercy by virtue of his atonement. Peter himself, for instance, had been pronounced clean by his Lord ; but, when a few days after, in the high priest's palace, he fell under temptation and denied that Lord,—a spot was cast upon him. His unfaithfulness, his fear of man prevailing over his fear of God, stained him with a stain which will never be effaced from his history, though soon blotted out from the book of God's remembrance. Without such spot of sin no one ever passed through the corruption of the world : save only He, of whom it was declared, that " tempted in all points like as we are, he was yet without sin," like the Lamb which prefigured him, without spot or blemish. And therefore it is, that we do not presume to come before God trusting in our own righteousness, but in his manifold and great mercies : and that all our devotions begin with humiliation and confession. And yet we are exhorted to *be diligent, that we be found without spot of sin*. St. Peter here speaks of wilful, unforsaken, unforgiven sins : sins which do despite unto the Spirit wherewith the Christian is sealed, and tempt Him to forsake us : sins which St. Paul describes as " the works of the flesh," i. e. of our original unrenewed nature, and of which he distinctly affirms, that they who do them have no inheritance in the kingdom of righteousness.⁴ We know of no spot of sinfulness so dark, that the blood

⁴ Eph. v. 5.

of Christ applied by faith may not wash it out, and leave the conscience pure: but we also know, that no sin is washed out which is not repented of and forsaken: and the soul can only be judged of, as being *without spot* in God's sight, as far as it has been freed from unrepented, unforsaken sin.

What constant need for watchfulness and prayer, that no stain be suffered to rest upon that heart which Christ has redeemed, "not to uncleanness, but to holiness;" that it might be pure as he is pure! For without such "holiness no man shall see the Lord." There stands on record the awful example of him to whom the words were spoken, "How camest thou in hither, not having the wedding garment?" Not being found of God *in peace, and without spot!* Who will not say with the psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and examine my ways, and see if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."⁵

There is a further exhortation, that we be *found blameless*. Blameless, if the Lord were "to mark iniquities," no child of Adam could ever be. And yet God has promised that some shall be blameless. Their "sin and their iniquities he will remember no more." "For there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Yet here, again, what need of watchfulness! How many beacons do the Scriptures set before us, showing where others have made shipwreck of their faith! The foolish virgins were not found blameless, who had neglected to trim their

⁵ Ps. cxxxix. 23.⁶ Ib. cxxx. 3.

lamps and keep them bright and burning, so that their light might shine before men, and they be ready to meet their Lord! The slothful servant was not found *blameless*, who had hidden—neglected—the talent, which had been given him to use, to use for the glory of God and the good of his fellow-creatures. A multitude will not be found blameless, who have “called Christ, Lord, Lord, and have not done the will of his Father which is in heaven.” Therefore the apostle’s warning: *be diligent, that ye be found blameless*: found to have been “doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man’s religion is vain.” “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

So doing, ye “stir up the grace of God” within you: so doing, ye are “not idle nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our God and Saviour: so doing, ye are good stewards of the manifold grace of God:” so doing, ye make your calling and election sure:” so doing, ye shall be *found of God in peace, without spot, and blameless*: and an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the kingdom wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

These words ought to be considered as an urgent call to “examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith—to prove our own selves.” What reason is there to suppose, that we shall be found *in peace*

with God, without spot, and blameless, in the great day, if we are not in that state now? These things do not come of themselves: it must be the effort of the whole heart to reach that state, and the business of the whole life to maintain it. Whoever has studied Scripture, and seen what holiness is: whoever has lived in the world, and seen what a world it is: whoever has considered his own heart, and perceived what is required there: he will know that without diligence; without pains and labour; none can appear before God in peace. Still if there is much to warn the Christian, there is more to encourage him. He has with him One who “will perform unto the end the good work which he has begun; One “who knows them that are his, so that none can pluck them out of his hand:” One “who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.”

Wherefore “abide in him; that when he shall appear, ye may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.”

LECTURE LIII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S GROWTH IN GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE.

2 PETER iii. 15—18.

15. *And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;*

16. *As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things ; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*

The long-suffering of our Lord is salvation. Every day that a threatened calamity is postponed, offers opportunity to escape. So Peter writes : and so his *beloved brother Paul had written* ; “ Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering ; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance ?”¹

Still it will be with too many, as it was of old : “ Because sentence against an evil world is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of man is steadfastly purposed to do evil.”² And often the mysteries of the divine counsels, and the operations of divine grace will be used to palliate sin, and to confound truth and error. Paul, in his epistles, had spoken much of these things. And no wonder if there were in them *some things hard to be understood* : “ For who hath known the mind of the Lord ? and who hath been his counsellor ?”

So that the description given by Peter here of the people of his own day, is exactly the description of the present age. Human nature is the same in all times and countries. Within thirty-five years of the time when the apostles had first gone forth, “ preaching the kingdom of God,” some were scoffing at the promises of God, having “ forsaken the right way,” and “ beguiling unstable souls.” Others were finding out, even in the Scriptures themselves, some-

¹ Rom. ii. 4.

² Eccl. viii. 11.

thing which they might *wrest to their own destruction*, instead of profiting by them to their salvation. Whilst others had received the word in “an honest and good heart;” had “laid hold of eternal life;” and were “bringing forth fruit with patience.” To these he drops a word of exhortation and consolation.

17. *Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.*

18. *But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*

As with the body, so with the soul. If there is health, there will be growth: *growth in grace*. In the christian life there will be a continued increase of vigour, a renewal of the soul day by day through the supply of the Spirit of our God. And this will be shown by two signs: First, by the overcoming of sin; and next, by advancement in righteousness and holiness.

1. The first beginning of a state of grace, is resistance against sin. To this the Christian is pledged by every consideration. He cannot continue in that which ruined the world. He cannot continue in that which Christ came to save him from. He cannot continue in that which crucified the Saviour. He cannot continue in that which must shut him out for ever “from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.” Therefore we read, “Whatsoever is born of God, doth not commit sin.”

But because sin is at once renounced, abandoned, resisted: it does not follow that all temptation is at

an end. Temptation is left, as the enemies of Israel were left on the borders of Canaan, to prove men, and see what is in their hearts. The new man is born, but not perfect. There is still the old nature contending against the new. Sinfulness remains, though "sin has no more dominion." They were in a state of grace, concerning whom Paul writes: "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 ye would."³ The enemy, who would otherwise prevail unresisted, is now disturbed and assailed: nay, he has received a severe and, we may hope, a mortal blow; but he has much strength left, and will renew the fight at every opportunity. And the first sign of growth in grace is, that Satan finds fewer opportunities: contends less hurtfully: shows that his strength is failing: the besetting sin, whatever it be, has less and less of power. If it be covetousness, the affections are more easily raised from things earthly to things above. If it be sensuality, intemperance, the flesh is more readily subdued to the Spirit, the affections and lusts more habitually mortified. If it be pride, this is kept down more and more, and succeeded by courtesy and meekness. If it be uncharitableness, such feelings give way more and more to a spirit of kindness and brotherly affection: so that the overcoming of sin, and the advance in righteousness, proceed together. The sin which is driven from the heart, does not leave the heart void; it is replaced by the opposite virtue. The weed which is rooted up makes way for the fruitful and profitable

³ Gal. v. 17.

plant ; and where there would be, perhaps there has been, wrath and malice, there is kindness and forbearance : where there would be, perhaps there has been, self-indulgence, there is temperance and moderation ; where there would be, perhaps there has been, pride and envying, there is humility and submission of mind.

Still these fruits of the Spirit, though from the first we see the promise of them, are not at once perfect : and some, perhaps, will be slower and less satisfactory in their growth than others. When the tree blossoms in the spring, we see the promise of a future harvest : but how slowly does the fruit advance, and how many storms and changing seasons it must survive, before it reaches its perfection ! So it is with the Christian's growth in grace : his improvement in all those qualities which show what he is, and whose he is. It is slow, and it is uncertain.

Growth, however, there must be : there must be progress. Our religion can no more be stationary than our years ; and therefore the apostle is not content with warning his people, lest they *fall from their own steadfastness* : he also requires them to *grow in grace*.

2. To grow in grace, and *in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ*. These he unites together, because one cannot be without the other. We cannot grow in grace, without growing in the knowledge of Him from whom the fulness of grace proceeds. And in proportion as our knowledge of Christ increases, we shall be more and more re-

newed "after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness."

When a man has accepted the invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden;" when he has heard this voice from above, and has "opened the door" of his heart, and admitted this "one mediator between God and man;" then it is that his knowledge of Christ is begun. The Spirit takes him, from that time, under his charge, and through the Scripture, through prayer, through meditation, through experience, gives him more and more acquaintance with the Saviour. The circumstances of his life will be made to favour this; are ordered for this purpose. His trials, his wants, his weaknesses, his successes, his disappointments, his hopes, his fears, will all work together, and promote his increasing knowledge of the Lord whom he is serving.

We may trace an example of this in the life and character of St. Paul. We often find him, in his familiar epistles, lamenting over his original blindness and hardness of heart, calling to mind the time when he was "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious" to the christian brethren. He does not forget this, as if no more to be remembered by him: he does not palliate it: but condemns himself for it in the strongest and severest terms. And then, in this strain of thought, the reflection follows which he applies as a balm to his wounded conscience: "This is a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."⁴ As if his thoughts ran thus. I am indeed

⁴ See 1 Tim. i. 13—16.

a sinner. "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me." But this is my confidence: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners: to provide a refuge for the penitent: to deliver, not those who were not sinful and had never sinned, but those who through sinful nature and sinful practice were condemned. Thanks be to God, "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

Such appears to have been the course of thought in the apostle's mind. And every such reflection, every such application to our own individual sinfulness of that blood which cleanseth from all sin, is an advance made *in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ*.

Another reflection which is frequent in St. Paul's writings, attends all other Christians too, and gives fresh increase to this knowledge. I mean, the weakness, and insufficiency, and sinful infirmity of which they are conscious.

The Christian knows, that "whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God;" that "whoever hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as He is pure," to whom he owes his hope. Therefore his desire, and prayer, and labour is, that the old and corrupt nature may be subdued in him, and the "new man" established in righteousness. Yet how imperfect is his sanctification! How different is he from what he ought to be, what he might be, what he longs to be! How constantly does he feel, that "when he would do good, evil is present with him!" How often has he reason to exclaim, "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"

Thus feeling the rebel power of sin, more evident now, perhaps, than formerly, because more earnestly opposed; the Christian is daily glad to fall back upon the comforting assurance, (St. Paul found it comforting, and so then may he,) "Not according to works of righteousness which we have done, but according to the mercy" of God, do we look for salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord.⁵

When this dependence gets possession of our hearts, we first come to the real knowledge of Christ. And every time that we renew these feelings, and recall to ourselves a sense of what we lean on, we *grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus*.

This knowledge is still farther increased by trials, by afflictions, by experience of support in them. Probably they are sent for this very purpose. As our Lord gives us reason to suppose, in his parable of the vine, of which his people are the branches, where he says, "Every branch in me that beareth fruit, the husbandman purgeth it, that it may bear more fruit."⁶ Such is the rule. And St. Paul, again, furnishes the example. He tells us, (2 Cor. xii. 7,) "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. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said: My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

What an increase did this add to the apostle's *knowledge of Christ!* We see it in what follows: in

⁵ Tit. iii. 5.

⁶ John xv. 2.

the warm expression of his feelings: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

And we, like St. Paul, who speaks here not as apostle, but as Christian—we too must be growing in this knowledge, if we mean to enjoy any comfortable hope. Whether it be with God or man, acquaintance must proceed as time proceeds, or it will first decrease and lessen, and then altogether disappear. If intercourse is continued, it must render knowledge more intimate; and if intercourse is discontinued, so in course of time is knowledge also.

Therefore cherish and promote it, by all the means by which it is wont to be promoted: by prayer, by meditation, by dependence on his strength, by active exertion in his cause, whenever opportunity is given. We find by experience that those who are most diligent in the use of means like these, do *grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*

THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF JOHN.

A. D. 90.

LECTURE LIV.

THE PRIVILEGE OF THE CHRISTIAN, AND THE
CHARACTER REQUIRED OF HIM.

1 JOHN i. 1—7.

1. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;*

2. *(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)*

3. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

4. *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

Thus, at the close of his life, the aged father leaves his last testimony to his children: and before he is removed from among them, assures them once more of the truth of those things which they had received, and on which their everlasting interest depended.

He speaks the more fully, the more plainly, the more earnestly, because there were already false teachers subverting the faith, and denying that "Jesus Christ had come in the flesh:"¹ had been really "made flesh, and dwelt among us." Therefore (like his brother apostle Peter) he repeats what he had so often declared before, that they might be able after his decease to have these things always in remembrance."² Jesus Christ is *the life, eternal life, the Word of life, the WORD which was from the beginning* "with God, and was God." And *the life was manifested*: it is *that which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled.*³ We cannot be mistaken in the evidence of our senses, and on that evidence our affirmation stands. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us*: that the same blessings may be yours which are ours. We are the first fruits: but the harvest is vast, and extends over fields innumerable, even to "as many as the Lord our God shall call:" shall call to be reconciled to him, call to be united with him: for our privilege is nothing less; *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

The more important a truth is, the stronger attestation it requires. The apostles themselves were slow to believe the resurrection of Jesus. It was

¹ iv. 3. Such were the Nicolaitans, and other sects which sprang from them; the Gnostics, Carpocratians, Menandrians.

² 2 Pet. i. 15.

³ That essence or excellence: not that person. The article is in the neuter gender, as John x. 30. "I and my Father are one:" εἷς, one essence.

necessary that their eyes should see and their hands handle. So, likewise, when Peter was delivered from prison, and knocked at the gate where many disciples were together praying, the damsel who came to hearken, "when she heard Peter's voice, opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, Thou art mad."⁴ On this account John repeats his assurance, and confirms it, that their faith might be steadfast, unmoveable, able to resist all the assaults of Satan, all the perversions of wicked men. *These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full*: that no clouds of doubt may overspread it, and cast a gloom of uncertainty over that truth, which ought to fill you "with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

And now he reminds them further of the truths which he had delivered to them, and which they had received from his teaching.

5. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declared unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

6. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:*

7. *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

The general tenor of the Gospel is declared in these few words. It is termed a *message*, which the apostles were taught to communicate. And it re-

⁴ Acts xii. 14.

lates, first, to the nature of God. The Gospel discloses the way in which God deals with man: and in order to comprehend this, we must first have a right knowledge of Him with whom we have to do. *God, then, is light.* God is essentially all that on earth the idea of *light* suggests to us: purity: knowledge: glory: with nothing of an opposite tendency: unpolluted, unfading light: *in him is no darkness at all.*

And the purpose of his *message* to men is, to draw them towards this light, that it may be reflected in themselves. As the darkest body, when brought to approach a shining flame, derives a brightness from it: so must it be with those who profess to have been brought nigh to God through the Gospel of his Son. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* As he is light, so all who are united to him must be light. He calls them to be partakers of his own holy nature: "and every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." This is the proof that our hearts are drawn to him, and united with him, that we "cast off the works of darkness," and *walk in the light*, as "children of the day," whose deeds will bear to be exposed;⁵ nay, which "shine before men," and attract others to the light to which they owe their brightness. Then are we indeed part of that family, which God has created for himself through Jesus Christ. *We have fellowship one with another:* we are joined together as brethren who have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism:" *and the blood of Jesus Christ clean-*

⁵ See a similar passage, Eph. v. 8.

seth us from all sin. Naturally, we are under the guilt of sin, and the power of sin. *But the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us* from both. It cleanseth us from the guilt of sin, because “he suffered for sin, the just for the unjust,” and God has consented to receive that propitiation. And it cleanseth us from the power of sin, because he imparts to us a new nature, and “delivers us from the corruption which is in the world” through those inclinations and desires which oppose the will of God, and lead to the transgression of his laws.

Such is the glorious description of those who have been brought to God through Jesus Christ, and are living in a state of acceptance with him. Instead of being ignorant of their relation to Him who made them, they have communion with Him: and they have also communion with those who belong to the same relationship, and form that great family on earth which is hereafter to be united in heaven.

But we must carefully observe, that with this happiness, holiness is inseparably conjoined. We are brought to the light, that we may be made light: brought into connexion with believers, that we may become holy: and we are made holy first, that we may hereafter be made happy. This the apostles never suffer us to forget; and warn us against the too natural error, which would lead us to rejoice in the privileges of God’s people, without caring to attain their character. The Bible has but one language. “Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness,

and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.”⁶

LECTURE LV.

ON SIN, AND THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN.

1 JOHN i. 8—10.

8. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

St. John had just been saying that *the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin*. And the train of thought leads him to add, that such cleansing is needful. The Christian is not free from sin, but is cleansed from the guilt of sin by the constant sprinkling of the blood of Christ. Like the vessels of the sanctuary in the Jewish temple, which did not remain uniformly pure, but were continually contracting stain. But they were as constantly purified, when sprinkled with the blood of the sanctuary.¹ The case with the Christian is the same. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves*. The nature of the soul is not so changed as to become perfect. Perfection it never reaches in this

⁶ Psa. xv. 1, 2, 5.

¹ Heb. viii. 21.

world, though still going on unto perfection. The heart is still "deceitful," though no longer "desperately wicked:" the spirit is still pressed down by the law of sin which is in the members, and cannot do the things it would.² So that *if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

Neither, indeed, so saying, or so thinking, could we have any right understanding of the Gospel. The Gospel is proposed to us, not as those who *have no sin*, but as those who "have sinned," and must answer for their sins. It comes as a remedy for the state of man as he is: for fallen man. It addresses us as offenders against God, and condemned as offenders. Scripture does not say, Blessed is the man who is without sin: though doubtless such a man, if he could be found, would be of all men the most blessed. But its language is, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."³

St. John, therefore, teaches us to keep on our minds a constant sense of this. *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.* If we confess, that we come before him as suppliants for his mercy, and not as those who claim a right: then *He is just and faithful to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from that unrighteousness* by which we should otherwise appear defiled before him. The very attributes which would condemn us, are then enlisted on our side. His faithfulness. For his prophet has declared, "To this man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor and of a

² See Rom. vii. 23.

³ Ps. xxxii. 1; Rom. iv. 7.

contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”⁴ His justice is also pledged in our behalf. Looking to ourselves, indeed, we dare not claim justice at his hands. We dare not draw as it were a balance with Him, our deserts on one side, and our demerits on the other. If we had no other hope than that which might be thus afforded us, our prospects would be dark indeed. But yet God’s justice is pledged, not to our condemnation, but our pardon. It pleased him to “put to grief” his beloved Son, that he might bear the sins of many. “The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.” And having thus laid the iniquity upon him, having received at his hands the full and sufficient satisfaction, the only satisfaction which could be paid to the divine holiness,—he will not charge the burthen on those who trust in him: who, in obedience to his word, have committed their souls to him, that he may “present them pure and faultless before the presence of his glory.”⁵

Such is the state of mind which from first to last befits the Christian. There is an opposite state of mind.

10. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

The word of God is all founded on the principle, that man is a sinner. Therefore to deny sin, is to deny the truth of his word: to make him false who has spoken it.

We may disclaim the idea of *saying that we have no sin*. There are but few who would plainly state

⁴ Isa. lxvi. 2.

⁵ Jude 24.

it. But without asserting so in plain terms, there are many ways of practically saying it.

To excuse our offences against the divine law, on the plea of a corrupt or weak nature, and to pretend that we are as free from blame as that nature would allow :—this is one way of *saying that we have no sin*. And whoever does so say, *deceives himself*. Has he studied to amend that nature by all the means which God has put into his power? To “purify his heart through the Spirit?” To “keep his body in subjection?”

Others form to themselves a law, and profess to be governed by it, and *say that they have no sin*, if they keep within the boundaries of this law of their own. They set up an imaginary charity, and an imaginary sincerity, some standard of duty fixed by themselves, and with this they are satisfied. St. Paul tells us that he had once lived under an error of this kind. “I had not known sin,” he declares, “unless the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.”⁶ He had kept to the letter of the law, but he overlooked its spirit. Like the Pharisees, who devoted to some other purpose the money which might have assisted their needy parents, and then thought themselves free from the obligation of the commandment, “Thou shalt honour thy father and thy mother.”⁷

If we would understand ourselves and our condition, we must represent to our minds the law which God has prescribed to us, the love of God and of our neighbour, in all its fulness, and in all its various bearings upon our lives. Then let a man

⁶ Rom. vii. 7—10.

⁷ Mark vii. 11.

try his thoughts and his actions by this rule, and say whether he has no sin; nay, whether he has lived according to this rule, even in the degree in which he might have approached it, with more constant watchfulness and prayer.

Certainly, *if we say we have no sin, the word of God is not in us.*

And yet, *to confess our sins* would be of no value, if it led to nothing more. To confess our sins, without lamenting them, or to lament them without striving to correct them, would be an abuse of God's mercy. To argue, God is merciful: if we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins:—therefore we need use no diligence to keep ourselves pure from sin:—this would be to turn the grace of God into a reason for offending him. The Christian confesses his sin, not because he is satisfied with it, but because he is striving against it; because he sets before him a standard which he has not reached, yet can never be contented without reaching. He does not make a trade of sinning and repenting: except as far as a person who is climbing up a steep and slippery rock may be said to be always rising and falling. Still he mounts higher and higher, though at the expense of many a fall: whilst another who refuses to climb, remains upon the plain below, and never reaches the prize which is proposed to him.

And the state of mind which is thus produced, is the christian state of mind. It unites us closely with our God and Saviour in two ways: both as showing us the need of his blood, *to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*; and of his grace, by which we

may be strengthened more and more, and enabled to “run with patience the race which is set before us.” We are then comforted with the assurance, that *if we confess our sins, God is just and faithful to forgive us our sins*: For that “not according to works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

LECTURE LVI.

ON JESUS CHRIST, AS OUR ADVOCATE AND OUR PROPITIATION.

1 JOHN ii. 1—2.

1. *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:*

2. *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

To recover man from sin, to create a people who should walk before God in righteousness and holiness, was the great purpose of Christ's coming into the world. He “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity.” Therefore St. John impresses upon his disciples, that they should not frustrate this purpose. *These things write I unto you, that ye sin not.* Let this be the great principle

of your hearts, that Christ died for sin, that ye might live unto righteousness.

Still I know, he would add, the frailty of your nature; the frailty that remains even in those that are regenerate, and made the children of God by adoption and grace. And your heavenly Father knows it; and your merciful Saviour knows it; and there is a remedy in the Gospel even for that which would not be committed if the Gospel were obeyed. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins.*

The office of Christ is here represented to us under the example of an advocate, who pleads the cause of one accused in a court of justice. He pleads the cause. His office is so far like that of Christ at the throne of God. But very different is the ground of his pleading. The advocate in the court sometimes pleads the innocence of his client, and shows that he has been falsely accused: and if this plea fails, he attempts to extenuate the heinousness of the crime. Not so our heavenly advocate. Our sin is too clearly seen by Him, to whom all hearts are open, and all desires known: and what can be pleaded in excuse? We have “done despite unto the Spirit of grace;” and chosen the light advantage which was but for a moment, in preference to the far more exceeding weight of future glory.

It is true that our nature is corrupt, and that we have much to contend against both in ourselves and in the world. And we have the comfort of knowing that “the Lord our God is a merciful God;” who does not demand what he has not given, and toge-

ther with man's works reckons also his opportunities. But does not the conscience of every one admit, that he has not acted to the best of his light and knowledge? That he might have avoided transgressions into which he has fallen, might have pleased God where he has displeased him?

The ground of pleading in our Advocate must be taken from his own nature, not from ours: from his perfect and complete satisfaction. *He is the propitiation for our sins.* He has undergone the penalty: and the sacrifice which he made upon the cross intercedes for us at the throne of God. When the Israelites had yielded to their besetting sin, and corrupted themselves by worshipping the molten image which Aaron was persuaded to set up, Moses was their advocate with the Father, and interceded for them, taking his argument from God's own glory. (Ex. xxxii. 11.) Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth?" But the pleading of Christ Jesus with the Father has another ground to rest on. The idea is suggested to the apostle, after he had used the term *advocate*. He is *the propitiation for our sins.* He has offered a propitiation, which he can plead in our behalf. He has satisfied the demands of justice, and so made the way clear for the exercise of mercy. Insomuch that we are assured that "the Father judgeth no man,

but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.”¹ The same idea is confirmed where the Son declares : “ All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me ; neither shall any (man) pluck them out of my hand.”² And again ; “ Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.”³ All this is the language of an advocate who has made *propitiation* : who has a covenant to plead, which gives efficacy to his intercession. They are those “ whom thou hast given me ;” for they have come unto me, trusting in my word, that “ whosoever believeth in me shall not come into condemnation.”⁴ “ It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is now at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”⁵

Thus wonderfully is the dispensation of the Gospel suited to the nature of man. Whoever accepts that dispensation, engages himself to renounce sin. *These things I write unto you, that ye sin not.* “ He that is born of God, cannot commit sin.” If these passages stood alone, what would be their effect, but to drive the whole world to despair ? Blessed be God, they do not stand alone. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father ; and he is the propitiation for our sins :* he has made a satisfaction sufficient, not *for our sins only*, who have first believed in him ; *but for the sins of the whole world*, “ even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

At the same time we observe how the overruling power of God is exercised in the whole dispensa-

¹ John v. 22.² Ib. x. 28.³ Ib. xvii. 24.⁴ Ib. v. 24.⁵ Rom. viii. 34.

tion. This, which is the language of God's word, could not be the language of man's word. It could not be said by any human governor, Your transgressions are forgiven you; go and sin no more. And if any man do transgress, there is yet a provision for his safety. He has an advocate to plead for him with the judge, who has already secured his pardon. This never has been, and never can be, the course of any human legislation, any human government; and for a reason which is very evident. When an offender against man's law is discovered, and he is convicted of guilt, his sorrow is not for his offence; but for his discovery. And if he receive a pardon, his joy is, not that he is reconciled to his ruler, but that he is freed from punishment. No change takes place in his heart. He was before sorry, but it was "the sorrow of the world:" and now he rejoices, and his joy is as worldly as his sorrow. There is therefore no reason to suppose, that if the temptation to transgress should recur, the transgression would not recur also.

Very different is the case with him who is received into favour with God, because he trusts in Jesus Christ. That faith by which he is received into favour, shows him all that need to be shown in order to deter him from sin. It shows the heinousness of offending a merciful and gracious, as well as a pure and holy, God and Saviour. It shows the dreadful consequences to which sin leads: how its "end is death." And thus through the influence of the Spirit, his heart is changed, together with his state. Whilst his person is accepted, his heart is renewed, and he "cannot sin, because he is born of God." He cannot be an habitual

sinner. He cannot yield to the dominion of sin. He cannot do anything but resist and strive against it; even though, through the frailty of his nature, he cannot always stand upright, and has daily reason to confess, "In many things we offend all." Whilst he reflects on this, he needs the encouragement here given by St. John. And as he needs it for his comfort, so likewise can he be trusted with it. He is not rendered careless, but thankful, because he has this perpetual consolation, that *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.*

LECTURE LVII.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IS THE KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS.

1 JOHN ii. 3—6.

3. *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*

The first inquiry suggested by this verse, is the meaning of the phrase, to *know* the Lord. And this will be best shown by referring to the same phrase in other parts of Scripture.

It is said of Samuel in his early youth: "That Samuel did not yet *know the Lord*, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him."¹ He had not that communion with God which arises from a

¹ Sam. iii. 7.

sense of his presence and gracious communications. Jeremiah, again, says of Josiah, king of Judah: "He judged the cause of the poor and fatherless: that it was well with him: was not this to know me, saith the Lord?"² "Was not this to be acquainted with God: to understand his character and his will? The same prophet has left on record a remarkable promise: "After those days, saith the Lord, they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest, saith the Lord."³

To *know* the Lord, therefore, is to have raised our minds towards Him whom our eyes cannot discern, and to have applied our hearts to seek his love and favour: to acknowledge his will as the rule of our will, and his law as the standard of our lives. Not merely to acknowledge that there is a God, or that there is a Saviour: but to have sought acquaintance with our God and Saviour through the thoughts and intents of the inward heart. Christ has explained what is *not to know* him, when, speaking of the day of judgment, he foretells: "Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets." But this was not to have a knowledge of the Lord. He shall say, "I tell you, I know you not, whence ye are."⁴ And to the same purpose St. John here supplies us with a test, by which we may judge concerning ourselves. *Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*

The connexion in which he writes this deserves

² Jer. xxii. 16.

³ Ib. xxxi. 34.

⁴ Luke xiii. 26.

particular notice. Just before, he had been supplying that consolation which our corrupt nature too often needs, and had offered balm to the wounded conscience, saying, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." But still, he proceeds, there is only one assurance that we are indeed the people of God, and that the benefit of his covenant is ours. There are many who would be glad to avail themselves of the propitiation made for sin; but there is only one proof of our having part or lot in it. *Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* For, be it ever remembered,

4. *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

5. *But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.*

6. *He that saith he abideth in him ought himself so to walk, even as he walked.*

Thus, to as many as receive it, is the plan complete, which God has prepared for bringing back his fallen creatures to himself. They are ransomed from death; freed from the condemnation under which they lay. A way is set before them, in which they should walk, and be secure. But it is a "narrow way:" and there is much which tempts them to turn aside. If the temptation has prevailed over the command, are they lost for ever? God "knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are but dust:" and the promise is, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." There is still a hope of acceptance, an

opening for return. But when the inquiry is made, which each man ought to be making for himself, Am I “accepted in the Beloved?” Am I one of those who so *know the Lord*, am so reconciled to God through faith that is in Christ Jesus, that the blessings of his covenant are mine? When this inquiry is made, the answer is, *Hereby we know that we are in him. Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the word of God perfected.*⁵ The love of God, which devised a scheme for his salvation: the love which called him to partake of it: the love which imprinted it on his heart: the love which made him a new creature, “meet for the inheritance of the saints:”—this wonderful love *is perfected*, is brought to fulfil the purpose for which it was designed, when he, towards whom it has been exercised, “walks worthy of the vocation wherewith he has been called,” and *keeps the word of God* as the rule by which he lives.

Suppose, for example, it had been the intention of Pharaoh’s daughter, when she preserved the infant Moses,⁶ to render him what he afterwards became, a faithful servant of God, an instrument in his hands to accomplish his will: suppose that this had been the object of the compassion with which she treated him, and saved him from an untimely death: this her *love would have been perfected*, its wish and desire would have been fulfilled and answered, when Moses, having come to age, refused the pleasures of an Egyptian court, and set himself to the deliver-

⁵ As St. John says, that by works is faith *made perfect*, completed; has its full developement. The original word is the same: *τελειουται*.

⁶ See Exod. ii. 9, &c.

ance of his brethren. The daughter of Pharaoh had no such design: but such is the design of God's love in redeeming man, that he may have "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." He feels that compassion for the corrupted state of man, with which he inspired the daughter of Pharaoh towards the infant Moses. "So God loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son, that all that believe in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." And therefore his *love is perfected*, when he sees those who are reconciled to him through Christ Jesus making him their example, and *so walking even as he walked*. This is the fruit which the Saviour himself desired: and when this fruit is matured, he "sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied." He sees that those who have been grafted into him *abide in him*. That is accomplished of which he spake, "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit: so shall ye be my disciples."⁷

Hereby, therefore, *do we know that we know him*. Here is the proof that we have an interest in him, and have part in the salvation which he wrought. The proof is, that we *keep his commandments*: that we make them the ruling principle of our hearts, the light by which we direct our steps, the standard by which we try our thoughts, and words, and works. And we are blessed and encouraged by the reciprocal assurance, that if we thus know him, he knows us also. He has expressly declared, "I

⁷ John xv. 4—8.

know my sheep, and am known of mine. They hear my voice, and I know them; and they follow me." And if he thus knows them, he preserves them: "they shall never perish," never be wrested "out of his hand."⁶

LECTURE LVIII.

BROTHERLY LOVE REQUIRED IN CHRISTIANS.

1 JOHN ii. 7—11.

7. Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning: the old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

St. John was exhorting the brethren to obedience, to holiness, to the love of God and man. This was, in one sense, no new thing: to the Jewish disciples it was the *old commandment which they had from the beginning*: wherever the true God was revealed, wherever his word was declared, this was its purport and design. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."¹ "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord."² This the Lord

⁶ John x. 14 and 27.

¹ Deut. vi. 5.

² Lev. xix. 18.

requires of thee, “to do justice, and love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God.” Such is the word that has been heard, wherever the word of God has been heard. “On these commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Yet Jesus Christ had said to his disciples, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another: by this shall men know that ye are my disciples, that ye have love one towards another.”³ And in allusion to this saying of the Lord, St. John proceeds:

8. *Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.*

It was an *old commandment*, because it was always the will of God concerning men. But again, it was a *new commandment*, and might truly be so termed. Because though light was in the world, the world knew it not. But *now the darkness is past, and the true light shineth*. New reasons had been given, why men should love one another. A new example had been set them: new motives to love had been disclosed, and a new measure of love held up: that they should love one another, “as Christ had loved them.” So that the Lord had justly said, “A new commandment I give unto you.” And St. John might justly repeat the phrase, “*A new commandment I write unto you.*”

Strange indeed it was, that this should be new: that men should not naturally love one another; that

³ John xiii. 34.

they should require to be commanded so to do; that four thousand years should have gone by, since man was first placed upon the earth, and yet that it should be needful to give this *new commandment*. Strange, at least, it would be, if this were not part of that corruption which we see around us, and feel within us. That corruption is shown in nothing more than in selfishness. "All seek their own:" their own ease, their own pleasure, their own advantage. To a certain extent, indeed, such is God's design, that men shall seek their own ease and advantage; for so is the world best ordered:—but not that they should only seek this; care for nothing else: not that they should benefit themselves to the injury of their neighbours, not that they should enjoy blessings themselves without sharing them out to others. It is this, however, to which human nature is inclined: this is what the world had done; and this is what the world still does, with the exception of those few (comparatively few) to whom our Lord has given his *new commandment*, and who have received it at his giving. Public wars, and private quarrels; frauds upon property, and injuries to persons, and calumnies against reputation: dishonest dealings, and overreachings in money transactions: disregard of the wants of others, as long as our own are supplied: all these are proofs that mankind have need of a *new commandment*: and that the commandment to love our brother is still new, still at least strange, to the greater number: and, if not unknown, is neglected and forgotten.

St. John therefore makes it a test of character; a proof of what he had been speaking of before, a man's being a real disciple of Christ.

9. *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.*

10. *He that loveth his brother, abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.*

11. *But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.*

Love and hatred are here put in contrast, as opposite to one another, like light and darkness. *He that hateth his brother* can no more be walking in the light of the Gospel, or have the light of the Gospel shining in his heart, than he who goes in the wrong direction, or finds *occasion of stumbling* at every stone, can be walking in the light of day. *He that hateth his brother is in darkness; he that loveth his brother abideth in the light.*

But what is this, to *hate* our brother? Some might say, that they are conscious of no such hatred; that they have no ill-will towards others, no wish to do them any injury: nay, perhaps, would be glad to serve or benefit them, if they could benefit them without loss or trouble to themselves.

Here we must refer to St. James.⁴ “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace; be ye warmed, be ye filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the body; what doth it profit?”

⁴ ii. 15, 16.

And so if a man say, I have no hatred towards my neighbour; and yet relieves none of his wants: speaks evil of his character: takes advantage of his necessities, or makes gain by his ignorance: it matters little whether he acknowledges or not the feelings of hatred: what could hatred do more to injure, or less to relieve?

And as hatred is known by works, so is love. Love is an active principle. Love, whether towards God or man, is an affection which will show itself. There will be evidence of it. And therefore when St. John says, *He that loveth his brother, abideth in the light*; he speaks of love which is shown by outward signs. He speaks of that love which seeks for opportunities: which looks out among friends, and neighbours, and acquaintances, for those to whom some benefit, spiritual or temporal, may be usefully imparted: he speaks of that love which is not content with doing no harm, but attempts to communicate some visible good: he speaks of that love, which spares upon itself, that it may impart to others: which steps out of the way, to relieve, to assist, to instruct, to advise: which lends, or gives, "looking for nothing again:" which "rejoices with them that rejoice," and, if possible, gives cause for rejoicing: which "weeps with them that weep," if it cannot dry up their tears.

There is nothing in this, which there will not be in love. Love will do no less, when it really exists and is cherished in the heart. And he alone *that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.*

LECTURE LIX.

CHRISTIANS CAUTIONED AGAINST THE LOVE
OF THIS WORLD.

1 JOHN ii. 12—15.

12. *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.*

13. *I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.*

14. *I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.*

15. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

With a most solemn address St. John prefaces his important counsel, *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.* He applies himself to every period of life, because every period of life is concerned in it. He addresses the youngest, *the little children*, that they might remember the blessings possessed by them: the forgiveness of sin, the knowledge of the Father. He addresses the *young men*, because they were entering upon life and its

temptations under an engagement to contend against and *overcome the wicked one*, “the prince of this world.” And he also appeals to the *fathers* in Christ, because of their experience. They *had known* “the only true God, through Jesus Christ whom he had sent.” Upon all these he enforces the same truth, because they were all exposed to the same trial, their faith subject to the same test. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.* The duty is, to love God with all the heart: and *if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

We cannot read this sentence, without perceiving how much it deserves to be considered. I am in the world; my duties, my affairs, my pleasures belong to the world; yet I am not to love the world. And, yet, many of the things which are in the world I am bound to love. If we could refuse to love relations, parents, husbands, wives, children, we should be disobeying another command of God. Still here is the precept, *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.* How are we to interpret this?

We must not so love anything connected with the world, as in our wishes and habits to prefer it to that better world which is to come, or to set it above the will of God. We must not so love any earthly thing as to “seek it first.” We must not so desire it, as to try for it in any unlawful way. We must not love it, more than we love the Father. The very idea sounds shocking. Yet every one has done this, who has ever pursued a present object in defiance or neglect of God and his commands.

For example. One of the things in the world which we cannot help loving, and desiring to possess, is the friendship and good word of those about us. But there may be those about us, those with whom we are much engaged in daily affairs, who neglect the care of the soul, and despise others who treat it as the first object to be considered. We must not, for the sake of pleasing or conciliating these, descend from our own principles, or lower our own practice. We must not, for the sake of keeping their good opinion, either do a wrong thing, or leave a right thing undone.

St. John acquaints us, (xii. 42,) that “many among the chief rulers believed on Jesus:” believed him to be the Christ: “but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.” These, then, were induced to act contrary to their duty, by the love of this world. As St. John truly explains it, they “loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

Again: It is lawful to possess the riches, the honours, the good things of the present life. No reproach attaches to a man, because he is born heir to a throne, or a large estate, or a great fortune. He is not to blame, if his talents have been so well used, or his industry so much blessed, that his worldly substance is increased. He is not to blame, if he possesses the comforts which the gifts of fortune are able to bestow. God gives us all things richly to enjoy, which we can procure honestly, and enjoy innocently.

But so to love these things, as to make them our chief object ; to serve only ourselves, and not God, by the use of them : to be proud of possessing them, or selfish in enjoying them : this is to *love the world, and the things that are in the world*, sinfully. Nebuchadnezzar offended thus, (Dan. iv. 29, 30,) when “ he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, and the king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the honour of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty ? ” By thoughts like these he manifested the state of his heart, and showed that he had forgotten “ the Most High who ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.”¹

The rich man in our Lord’s parable (Luke xii. 16) was a sinful lover of the world and its possessions, when he said to his soul, “ Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years : take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.”

Job, on the other hand, saw the danger connected with the world, (xxxi. 24,) and says, “ If I have made gold my hope, or said to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence : if I rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because my hand had gotten much : this were an iniquity to be punished by the judge, for I should have denied the God that is above.”

The business of the world has with it a snare of the same kind. It ought to be followed ; but followed lawfully, and consistently with the service of God. It may be so followed, as to exclude the *love of the Father*. This is shown in the parable² of the

¹ Dan. vi. 32.

² Luke xiv. 18, &c.

marriage banquet, and the answer of those bidden. "I have bought a piece of ground. I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them. I pray thee have me excused. I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." In all these, the *love of the world and the things that are in the world* prevails over the love of God. If that had been uppermost in the minds of the guests invited, all other engagements would have been secondary when his command arrived.

Therefore St. John has truly said, *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* He does not obey the demand of God, which asserts his claim to our first affections. "My son, give ME thy heart." It is the same thing to love the Father, and to serve the Father: and we can no more *love* God and mammon, than we can *serve* God and mammon.

May then "the Lord direct our hearts into the love of God, and the patient waiting for Christ," who has invited us to choose that "one thing needful," that "good part, which shall not be taken away."³

³ 2 Thess. iii. 5; Luke x. 42.

LECTURE LX.

THE DANGER OF WORLDLY THINGS.

1 JOHN ii. 16—17.

16. *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

Here the apostle gives his reason for the injunction which he had before laid down so forcibly, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." *The lust of the flesh*: all that gratifies our animal nature: *the lust of the eyes*, all that gratifies the eyes, and the eyes delight in: *the pride of life*: all that elates the mind with vanity and self-complacency:—*is not of the Father*: the natural tendency of these things is not to conduct us towards God, but away from God: they are "of the earth, earthy," and lead the heart to be satisfied with this present world, rather than to look beyond.

And this is agreeable to all experience. We know, for example, the danger which attends the *lust of the flesh*: the indulgence of the appetites and passions. "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of

eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.”¹ It is when “the harp and the viol, the tabret and the pipe, and wine are in their feasts, that men forget the works of the Lord, neither regard the operations of his hands.”² We know what injured the character of David: caused him to remain, through many months, in utter forgetfulness of God’s commands; and has left a stain upon his memory which can never be wiped away. We know also that through the same habits of self-indulgence Solomon was drawn aside from the wise and safe path which he had chosen. As Nehemiah warned his countrymen, (Neh. xiii. 26,) “Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless, even him did outlandish women cause to sin.” These are left unto us for examples: examples which too truly prove, that if the heart is to retain its love towards the Father, the body must be “kept under and brought into subjection.” When the soul ventures to think within itself, “Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;” it has already departed from the love of the Father, and chosen this present world.

And so *the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life*: that which it is rare to possess, and therefore which is coveted; the magnificence of wealth: this is too pleasing to the natural man, to be safe for the renewed mind. There was much danger in what the queen of Sheba admired in the court of Solomon:³

¹ Prov. xxiii. 30.

² Isa. v. 12.

³ 1 Kings x. 5; 2 Chron. ix. 4.

“ the houses that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cup-bearers.” All this belongs to rank and station: the Scripture does not condemn it, in itself: but still we feel, that it *is not of the Father, but of the world*: that a constant effort must be maintained, lest in the end it should detach the heart and withdraw the affections from objects of real worth and lasting interest. . Even one of the best of the kings of Judah, Hezekiah, was not proof against this danger.⁴ When the ambassadors came from the king of Babylon, (2 Kings xx. 13,) congratulating “ him on his restoration from the bed of death, he showed them all the house of his precious things, the silver and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures; there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.” We know, from what follows, the spirit in which he showed these things: with that pride and self-complacency which too often attends the possession of what few are able to obtain, and all are accustomed to admire. He received a severe rebuke from God. And Scripture has left it on record for our instruction, that even a good man was thus betrayed into error: that he “ rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him, for his heart was lifted up:” that “ in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.”

The apostle has furnished us with a warning. He

⁴ 2 Chron. xxxii. 25—31.

also supplies us with a motive to enforce that warning.

17. *And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

It is by obtaining a proper sense of this acknowledged truth, that we may overcome our desire of those things which we so naturally love. It is by cherishing an affection for things worthy of it, that we produce a distaste for things unworthy. We are not to become insensible: but alive to the object deserving our regard, and only dead to that which has no true value. Therefore St. John reminds us, the *world passeth away, and the lust thereof*. The time will soon arrive to every one, when all that has been acquired, and all that has been enjoyed, must lose its power to benefit or please. It will not mitigate a pain, or soothe an anxious thought, to have enjoyed, like Solomon, all that most gratifies the senses, or, like Hezekiah, all that excites the admiration of mankind. One thing only will avail: to have set before us the will of God: to have fixed our affections on things above: to have laid up treasures in heaven: to have sought an inheritance which does not pass away.

This, then, is the sentiment which ought to be impressed upon us. We desire to possess some present gratification. We desire to improve our temporal estate: to raise our worldly condition. We should remember, at the same time, that in a few years, or even in a few months or days, the pleasures we have enjoyed, the condition we have attained, will no more signify to us than the wind which has blown, or the sound which has passed by. But whether we have loved the Father or

mammon ; whether we have sought first the kingdom of God, or the things of the world : this will signify to us not only then, but for ever. For though the world and its treasures pass away, there is that which never passes away.

An example may illustrate this. We read of a young ruler who visited our Lord, and inquired concerning eternal life : but when the invitation was given him to part with all he had, and join the company which was following Christ, “ he went away sorrowful, for he had many possessions.”⁵ Now, how long did these possessions profit him ? We know not how long his life may have been spared : it may have been twenty, thirty, forty years : but what are these years in comparison with eternity ? Death certainly came at last : and whenever death came upon him, there was an end of *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life* : they *passed away* : one thing alone remained ; the regret, the sorrow, the remorse of conscience, to reflect on what he had forfeited for the sake of vanity and self-indulgence.

Conceive, then, that you could ask this young ruler, what he thinks now of his foolish preference : what he would choose now, if it were possible for him to choose again. Be assured, what he would do, we ought to do, we on whom the day of salvation is still shining ; and he would advise to leave anything, renounce anything, suffer anything, rather than forfeit the prize of that high calling to which we are called in Christ Jesus. *For the world passeth away, and the lust thereof.* They may last us but a few days : they can last us but a few years,

⁵ Matt. xix. 22.

even if, whilst they do last, they could satisfy. *But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

LECTURE LXI.

A WARNING AGAINST FALLING FROM THE TRUTH.

1 JOHN ii. 18—25.

18. *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.*

19. *They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.*

St. Paul had warned the Thessalonians to let no man persuade them “that the day of Christ is at hand.”¹ For there must first be “a falling away:” a departure from the faith. And again, writing to Timothy, he says, “The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.”² The Christians, therefore, *had heard that antichrist should come*: that some should oppose, and others should renounce the truth as it is in Jesus. And though that antichrist had not yet appeared,

¹ 2 Thess. ii. 1—3.

² 1 Tim. iv. 1.

that “man of sin,” that “son of perdition”³ which was chiefly to be dreaded and resisted; yet even now there were *many antichrists*: many who bore the same character, and corrupted the Gospel of Christ. *They went out from us*, says St. John: they once seemed to be *of us*, being baptized in the name of the Lord. But *they were not of us* indeed. This we see by the end. We thought them sincere, even as others: but the event has proved that they were *not of us*, otherwise *they would no doubt have continued with us*: we should not have found them opposing the faith which once they received.

It was thus with Simon, (Acts viii. 13,) who witnessed the miracles performed by Peter, and, as we there read, “believed also, and was baptized.” Peter soon found occasion to say of him, “Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter.” Thou art not really *of us*, nor ever wert, or thou wouldest not have desired to turn the gifts of the Holy Ghost to the purpose of thine own selfishness.

In the sight of man a great change takes place, when one turns aside from the faith; when one who had gladly received the word, “in time of temptation falls away.” But no change really takes place in that man’s condition. In the sight of God he was always what he now shows himself to be—unconverted. He had never been justified before that all-seeing eye, from which no secrets are hid; which from the first perceived that he had not the “honest and good heart, which having heard the word, keeps it, and brings forth fruit with patience.”

St. John tells us in his Gospel, after Jesus had

³ See 2 Thess. ii. 3.

been declaring more openly than before the spiritual nature of his kingdom, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."⁴ Before that time these disciples would have appeared to their brethren as sincere as themselves; no man would have dared to say, These are *not of us*. But to the Lord this was no secret. He knew his own; for "he knew what was in man." He could say, "Ye are clean; but not all."⁵ For he was aware who should betray him, when the apostles no more suspected Judas than themselves; so that when he said, "One of you shall betray me," they replied to him by inquiring, "Lord, is it I?"⁶

When therefore John says, *They were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us*; he means, that they had never turned to the Lord with all their hearts, so that the promise might be fulfilled to them, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."⁷ They had never so "received" Christ, that he could say, "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."⁸ Temptation came; an occasion of falling was given: and then it appeared that there was no root in them. Many, we may easily believe, who had been induced to profess the faith of Christ, would afterwards desire to escape from a religion which they found more pure than they were disposed for, and more self-denying than they had reckoned on. And one way in which they would free themselves from the yoke, would be by deny-

⁴ vi. 66.⁵ John xiii. 10.⁶ Matt. xxvi. 22.⁷ Jer. xxxi. 33.⁸ John x. 28.

ing *that Jesus is the Christ*. If he were not the Christ, they were not bound to follow him. And as they were wearied of following him, they would easily be persuaded that he was not the Christ. They would readily believe the arguments of those who denied that Jesus Christ was come in the flesh, and join the *many antichrists*, who in some way or other opposed the true doctrine of the Gospel. Thus they *went out* from the company of believers, and were *made manifest that they were not of them*.

But of the Christians whom St. John was now addressing, he “*hopes better things*.” They had *an unction from the Holy One*: had been anointed as it were by the Holy Ghost: that “*Spirit of truth*,” who should “*guide them into all truth*,”⁹ and enable them to distinguish it from the falsehoods which these antichrists affirmed.

20. *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.*

21. *I have not written unto you, because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.*

22. *Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.*

23. *Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [but] he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also.*

24. *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.*

25. *And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.*

⁹ See John xvi. 13—15.

Thus he warns them to maintain the truths which they had received, and let no man deceive them with vain words: to hold *that which they had heard from the beginning. Let that abide in you.* That truth is as a seed, which if it remain in the ground, and is daily nourished there, springs up into a vigorous plant, and brings forth fruit abundantly. That truth is as a graft inserted in a stock, and if the sun does not scorch it, or the storm dislodge it, changes the nature of the tree, and yields that new produce which the husbandman desires. Such is the effect of that truth which ye have heard from the beginning, that *Jesus is the Christ*: is He whom “God anointed to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and the remission of sins:” “neither is there salvation in any other:” for he “is made unto us of God wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption.” This is what ye *have heard from the beginning*: this is the faith into which ye were baptized: and if ye maintain this as the principle of your lives, *ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.*

And, so continuing, ye shall receive the promise made to all who thus “receive” the Lord Jesus. “An entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our God and Saviour.” *For this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.*

John had now trusted to that promise more than sixty years;¹⁰ so that he spoke as one having authority, as one who had tried and experienced what he recommended to others: one who “knew in

¹⁰ According to the more probable date of this epistle.

whom he had believed,” and that he was able to fulfil his promises: to give grace and peace, comfort and holiness at this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting. *For he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.* “And this is eternal life, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.”

LECTURE LXII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S GROUND OF CONFIDENCE.

1 JOHN i. 26—29.

26. *These things have I written unto you, concerning them that seduce you.*

27. *But the anointing, which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.*

We read in the book of Genesis, (xxviii. 18,) that when Jacob dedicated to God the place where God had favoured him with a vision, he took the stone on which he had laid his head, “and set it up for a pillar, and *poured oil* upon it.” When the law of Moses was established among the Israelites, the place of worship, and the vessels used in worship, and the priests who worshipped, were *anointed with*

*oil.*¹ When Samuel was sent to select a king for Israel, (1 Sam. ix. 1,) “he *took a vial of oil*, and poured it on his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?”

To anoint, therefore, was to consecrate. These Christians had been consecrated to God, when baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus: had been anointed with the Spirit of God, of which the oil was understood to be an emblem. And *the anointing which they received of him*, had been an *abiding sanctification*. It had not been with them as with Saul of old, concerning whom the Lord declared, “Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord hath rejected thee from being king.”² These Christians had not been *seduced*: not led away by any antichristian spirit to deny the truth: they had remained stedfast; and therefore St. John had comfort respecting them, that *the same anointing*, the same Spirit, should *teach them of all things*, “guide them into all truth,” and preserve them unto the end. He had *no need to teach them afresh*: they had a better teaching from above, which should perform the work which had been begun.

Still he gives them his warning counsel.

28. *And now, little children, abide in him; that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

29. *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.*

Dearly beloved, *abide in him*. Once more I warn you against seducers; once more I exhort you to

¹ Exod. xxviii. 41; Lev. vi. 10; vii. 1, &c. &c.

² 1 Sam. xv. 23.

“hold fast the beginning of your confidence stedfast unto the end.” Abide in the faith; and let that faith lead you to maintain a continual sense of dependence upon Christ, an habitual communion with him. Seek that supply of grace which you daily need, from him in whom “it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell;” and of whose fulness all his disciples receive. “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in him.”

Knowing, however, the danger to which they were exposed, whilst he gives the exhortation, he adds the motive too: *That when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

Here he speaks of the Lord’s coming, as a steward might speak of the expected arrival of his master to take account. He speaks of it as an event to be prepared for, since at that hour, some will have confidence, and others will be ashamed before him.

Some, it appears, may *have confidence*. And yet confidence is a bold word when used in connexion with the judgment seat of God. When this seems to be distant, in the day of youth or of health, it is easy to have confidence. We know that we must some time or other die: but we know at the same time that such is the lot of every man; and what is common to all, has no terrors till it appears nigh at hand. But the difference is astonishing which the actual approach of death produces in the awakened mind. It is the lifting up of the veil which may seem before to have overspread the eyes even of the faithful Christian. What had been considered as

satisfactory obedience, is then seen to have been mixed with inexcusable transgression. What others treat as laudable service, now discovers all its shortcomings. How much time has been wasted! How many opportunities neglected! How little has been accomplished of what might have been done! How much remains to answer for, both of omission and transgression! Who shall say, I am pure from my sin?

And yet the apostle says, that *we may have confidence*. If we *abide in Christ, we may have confidence*. For he has declared, "Whosoever heareth my words, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation."

Still we know on what this confidence must depend. A master leaves his house, and goes into a far country, and puts his servants in charge of all he has. After a while, it may be a long or a short while, he comes to take account. When the tidings were brought that he was approaching, we know who would have confidence. Not those who had kept out of sight the orders left for their direction. Still less those who had said, "My lord delayeth his coming:" let us follow our own devices, and do what is right in our own eyes. They alone would have confidence who had made his rule their rule, and so lived as having an account to render. They need not be ashamed, but *rejoiced at his coming*.

Our Lord describes, in fearful terms, the dismay which his approach will cause in those who have no such ground of confidence. "Behold, the bride-

groom cometh : go ye forth to meet him.”³ We see the disturbance, the distress of mind occasioned by this summons. Now at the last moment they are seeking what ought to have been ever ready. “ Give us of your oil ; for our lamps are gone out.” They now perceive that they dare not appear before the bridegroom. So it too frequently happens in the world, when those who have borne the name of Christ find death approaching. They have no confidence. The truth now flashes upon them, that *he is righteous* : and that only *every one that doeth righteousness is born of him*. Only they are the sons of God who are led by the Spirit of God ; and only the sons of God are heirs of the heavenly kingdom. The dutiful children are not ashamed, when the father returns to the family which he had left for a while. But those *are justly ashamed at his coming*, who have taken the children’s place without the children’s claim.

It is wise and prudent to be in the habit of realising to ourselves the hour, when “ the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, and shall sit upon the throne of his glory.” So, as he has commanded, we may “ be ready.” We may *have confidence* ; such confidence as may bear the test of Scripture. Not the confidence of the presumptuous man, who “ trusteth in himself that he is righteous.” Nor the confidence of the enthusiastic man who trusts in Christ, and can show no grounds for such reliance. But the confidence which Paul enjoyed, and of which he

³ Matt. xxv. 6—8.

tells us the basis on which it rested. "He had lived the life of faith in the Son of God, who loved him, and gave himself for him." There is no uncertainty in the text. He *that doeth righteousness is born of him*. He that makes it the business of his life to resist "the desires of the flesh and of the mind," when they do not move in subjection to the divine law, and to bring every thought and word and work into obedience to the commands of Christ; he it is that *doeth righteousness*, and he, doing righteousness, does that which the Lord requires of him. "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." And, "Blessed are those servants, whom their Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing." "Verily, I say unto you, He shall make them rulers over all that he hath."

LECTURE LXIII.

THE HIGH CALLING OF CHRISTIANS, AND THEIR CORRESPONDING OBLIGATIONS.

1 JOHN iii. 1—3.

1. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*

Inspired by the subject of which his mind was full, the apostle here breaks forth in an expression

of wonder at the infinite mercy and goodness of God displayed in the Gospel. *Behold*, he begins; he calls on all to attend, and contemplate with him the mighty subject of redemption. Angels themselves, we are assured, take an interest in it; well may men. *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God!* Whatever we consider, whether the majesty and holiness of God, or the guilt and unworthiness of men, we may be astonished at the degree of love displayed towards us. That they, who had behaved towards God like enemies, should be treated by him as sons; received into his favour, instructed by his grace, supported by his care, made heirs of an everlasting kingdom; such is *the love which the Father hath bestowed upon us*: such are the privileges to which the Christian is admitted, becoming a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

But this, says St. John, is not comprehended by all men. *Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.* The thoughtless world may not *know* the sincere Christian: may not understand him, because they understand not the God whom he serves: may not acknowledge him, because his ways are different from their own. But God knows him; that is enough: to God he lives, and not to the world. He is satisfied that God has received him as his own son by adoption through Christ Jesus. As the apostle proceeds:

2. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he*

shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.

It doth not yet appear what we shall be. The blessings prepared in heaven for the faithful disciple of Christ, cannot now be described to us. We cannot comprehend the nature of that future state of things, which shall begin when the present world is passed away. The Scripture does not attempt to explain it : all we are told is, that “ eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

It doth not yet appear, it has not been clearly revealed, *what we shall be* : but this *we know*, this *is revealed*, *that when he shall appear*, when Christ shall come again in glory, *we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* He himself has said it. “ Where I am, there also shall my servant be.”¹ And St. Paul tells us to what he was looking forward. “ Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face : now I know in part ; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”² And again, “ The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”³ Well may we repeat the sentence, if we seriously consider the nature of the promise, *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us !* We talk familiarly of “ the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.” But do we lead our minds to dwell on the

¹ John xii. 26.

² 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

³ 1 Cor. xv. 52.

meaning of these phrases? A soul “made perfect:” a “glorious body:” “made like to” the Lord Jesus, so as to *see him as he is*, “on the throne of his glory, “God over all, blessed for ever!” This is what we should set before our minds, as plainly as our faculties allow. This is what is offered ME: to this I shall actually come, if I now receive Christ Jesus as my Redeemer and my Lord: for “as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.” Thus to meditate and reason with ourselves, is to realise the promises of Scripture; to make them our own: to act upon them: to live for them. And the next sentence shows the effect they will produce, if we do indeed bear them upon our hearts.

3. *And every man that hath this hope, in him † purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

Whoever has the hope, the expectation, the desire, to become a “joint heir with Christ” in the heavenly kingdom, strives and labours to fit himself for so glorious a station. To take no such pains, would prove that he was indifferent to the honour. On this principle St. John says, *Every one that hath this hope, purifieth himself.* His conscience assents to the truth that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord:” that he must be holy, even as he who hath called him is holy:” that if his treasure is in heaven, his heart must be in heaven; and his “affections set on things above, not on things of the earth.” His understanding concurs with Scripture in assuring him of this: his understanding goes

† In Christ, ἐν αὐτῷ.

along with Scripture when it declares that the malicious, the revengeful, the unmerciful, the covetous, the impure and sensual, the reveller, “ have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”⁵ From all such things then, from all the sinful lusts of the flesh, he purifies himself. Or rather, since he knows and feels that he cannot renew his own nature, he prays that gracious Saviour who has called him to holiness, to make him holy. Still he *purifieth himself*: that is, he takes as much pains to keep clear of sin, as if all depended on his own strength and exertion. He will not tamper with any sort of evil: he refuses to listen to it; he will not place himself in the way of it; he will not be found where it is practised, or where he might be tempted to practise it. Thus in godly sincerity “ he keepeth himself: and that wicked one toucheth him not.”

This must be the proof, the main proof—for Scripture admits no other—of our spiritual state, of our reasonable hope in Christ. Is a man *purifying himself*? striving to be relieved from that corruption which belongs by nature to the flesh and spirit, and labouring to become more and more like that which Scripture requires him to be, and teaches him to be, and expects him to be? To become less open to temptation, more obedient to the motions of the Spirit of God? Less envious or uncharitable? More forgiving, kind, affectionate? Less selfish, or covetous, or peevish; more liberal and courteous? Less given to self-indulgence; more temperate and sober? Less prone to anger

⁵ Compare Gal. v. 19, 20; and Eph. v. 5.

and evil speaking; more mild and meek, more master of his passions and his tongue?

In proportion as this is the case with any man, he is *purifying himself*: and in proportion as he is purifying himself, he has a right to that *hope*, that blessed hope, which belongs to the believers in Christ and the children of God.

LECTURE LXIV.

DELIVERANCE FROM SIN THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S COMING.

1 JOHN iii. 4—6.

4. *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.*

The plan of life which befits the Christian, and distinguishes him from others, as St. John had before stated, is to be habitually cleansing the heart from all that is displeasing to God, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Those who act thus, give a proof that they have a knowledge of God, whom they are constantly desiring to please and serve. To fail in this, is distressing to them: and as far as they are enabled to walk in this path, they enjoy "the comfort of the Holy Ghost." No such comfort, no reasonable hope, belongs to those who continue in sin. *Whosoever committeth sin,*

transgresseth also the law ; not only shows himself unworthy of that to which he is invited by the Gospel, but is accountable to God for breaking his commandments: *for sin is the transgression of the law* : of that law which God has enacted to govern the creatures whom he has made. All, indeed, had broken this law ; and because they had broken it, because their corrupt nature made them unable to fulfil it, they were lying under the wrath and condemnation of God. This miserable state of man brought Jesus Christ down from heaven. Pity for this state clothed him in our flesh, and caused him to submit to death, even the death of the cross. *Ye know*, St. John proceeds,

5. *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins ; and in him is no sin.*

He was manifested ; he came in the flesh *to take away our sins* ; to take away, first, that record of them, which was laid up against us ; to blot them out, as it were, “ from the book of God’s remembrance.” Such is the virtue of his blood, shed upon the cross : a sacrifice which it pleased God to accept in the stead of those who had no sacrifice to bring : a “ full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.” But he was also *manifested to take away our sins*, by cleansing us from the love of sin ; by renewing our nature after the image of God, which had been lost through Adam’s disobedience, and creating us again in righteousness and true holiness. As he himself declares, “ Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”¹ “ That which is born of the flesh, is flesh :”

¹ John iii. 8-6.

that which man inherits as the nature received from his parents, is corrupt and sinful: but "that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit:" that which he receives as a member of Christ's flock, and a child of God, is designed to do away his corruption, and gradually overcome the evil propensities of the flesh. So St. Peter taught his Jewish brethren; "God sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."²

It follows from this, as St. John goes on to say,

6. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

Whosoever *abideth* in him. The invitation is, that we come to him: take refuge in him, as it were, as Noah did in the ark, from the wrath of God, the power of sin, and the assaults of Satan. Faith in this invitation, a belief that it can save us, leads us to him: and then we are said to dwell with him, and he with us; to abide in him, and he in us. So we read, (John xv. 4,) "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." Such is the promise. And then follow the effect and proof of the promise being received. *Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not: whosoever sinneth, hath not seen*

² Acts iii. 26.

him, neither known him : hath not, with the eye of faith, discovered the Saviour ; hath not known him, with an understanding enlightened by the Spirit of God.

But what, you will inquire, is this that we have read? *Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not?* Is there any man who lives, and is never betrayed into sin? Any man whose hand never does, whose tongue never speaks, whose heart never conceives, anything contrary to the perfect and holy law of God?

We know there is not ; our own consciences, and our own experience, assure us so ; what we see in others, and what we feel in ourselves, convinces us that “by the works of the law,” i. e. by perfect obedience to the righteous will of God, “no man shall be justified.” And if we did not perceive this, St. John himself would set us right : for he tells us, (i. 8,) that if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. What then is this, *Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not?*

It is this ; that whoever abides in the faith of Christ, has inwardly renounced all known and wilful sin : he has declared war against it : he is fighting and labouring against it ; he may feel sin as an enemy, but he does not court it as a friend : he is the servant of Christ, and has ceased to be the slave of Satan. And Christ, whom he serves, will not permit him to be brought under the power of the tyrant whom he has left. The words of our Lord to the apostle Peter may instruct us here. (Luke xxii. 31.) “Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat ; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.” Peter had chosen

Christ as his portion, in safety or in danger, in life or in death. And Christ, who knew him to be sincere, took him under his care. Yet this did not prevent his falling into a grievous transgression, that of denying his Lord thrice in the hour of trial.

But did he allow himself in this sin? Did he sit easy under it? Did he repeat it, or continue in it? Conscience-struck, “he went out, and wept bitterly;” and devoted the remainder of his days to the active, zealous duty of an apostle.

And thus it is with all: the proof of their abiding in Christ is, that they do not abide in sin. *Who-soever sinneth wilfully and habitually, hath not seen him, neither known him.*

To this sign, and this alone, we are taught to look, both to understand ourselves and others.

LECTURE LXV.

THE CHILDREN OF GOD ARE KNOWN BY THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

1 JOHN iii. 7—12.

7. *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.*

8. *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of*

God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Vain, therefore, are the thoughts and words of those, who would look to any other proof of acceptance with God, except the *doing righteousness*. *Little children, let no man deceive you.* So the apostle repels plausible reasonings by a plain and simple assertion. St. Paul had done the same : saying, “Let no man deceive you with vain words : for because of these things (these transgressions which he had enumerated) cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.”¹ This caution shows that even then an attempt was made to gloss over the commission of sin, as if consistent with christian faith : to judge of the spiritual state, perhaps, by the feelings, the imagination, the desires ; by something inward, instead of the habits of life and outward practice. Not he who talks plausibly of his love to God, whilst he does nothing for his service : not he who professes to glory in the cross of Christ, but does not keep his laws,—he is not *righteous* ; he is not justified before God : but he who is led by God’s love towards himself to do unto all men as he would they should do unto him : he who is constrained by the death of Christ for sin, to forsake, avoid, oppose sin in all its forms. This is the *doing righteousness* ; the practising righteousness : not the occasional performance of a just or liberal deed, but the observance of holy, sober, upright, charitable habits, with eternal life in prospect, and the will of God in constant view. *For this purpose the Son of*

¹ Eph. v. 6.

God was manifested, that he might establish works like these, and *destroy the works of the devil*, which are contrary to these. This is the impassable distance between those that are *of the devil*, and those that are *of God*. *God is righteous*: and he that doeth righteousness, is of God. *The devil sinneth from the beginning*: and he that committeth sin is *of the devil*. So St. John proceeds to say.

9. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*

Such is that renewed nature which the Spirit produces in the christian heart. As the original nature is prone to sin; and argues, How can I resist the temptation which is so congenial to my disposition?—so the renewed nature is averse from sin, and asks, “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” The one cannot do righteousness, any more than a corrupt tree can bring forth good fruit. The other cannot commit sin, any more than a good tree can bring forth evil fruit. No outward restraint, indeed, is laid on nature, making sin impossible to it. The Christian’s case is not like the case of Balaam, who escaped the sin to which Balak urged him, not because his disposition was averse to it, but because God exercised his power over him, and controlled his words.² But one that *is born of God cannot sin*, because of his altered nature. Like the prophet Micaiah, he *could not* follow the example of the false prophets, but said to Ahab, “As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith

² Num. xxii. 13, 18, &c.

unto me, that will I speak.”³ Or as the apostles, who declared, when commanded not to teach in the name of Jesus, *We cannot but speak* the things which we have seen and heard.⁴

Such is the case, as far as the new nature prevails. But it may happen that all the fruit even of a good tree is not sound. In a world like ours, bad seasons will affect even good trees. And so one who is born of God, though he *doth not commit sin* as an habitual practice, is not rendered incapable of sinning, as an angel may be incapable, or as Christ was incapable: he may fall into sin through the effect of temptation. But this, instead of agreeing with his general character, is in contradiction to it, as much so as worthless produce from a well-grafted tree. The divine *seed*, the seed of grace, *remaineth in him*; and makes it impossible for him, because contrary to his nature, to “continue in sin.”

Peter, for example, committed sin; grievous sin was his, when he denied the Lord to whom he owed so much, and to whom he had solemnly vowed obedience. And we see it to be true of Peter: *he cannot sin, because he is born of God*. No sooner does he come to himself, being brought to reflection by recollecting his Master’s words, than “he went out, and wept bitterly.”⁵ He repented of his transgression; and he transgressed no more. He could not continue unfaithful. On the morning of the resurrection he was early at the sepulchre: and wherever the apostles were assembled, he was of their company. He could not remain a denier of

³ 1 Kings xxii. 14.

⁴ Acts iv. 20.

⁵ Luke xxii. 62.

his Lord. We could not therefore justly say of Peter, *He is of the devil*, because in this single case he had yielded to the temptation of the devil. We could not declare of him, what the Lord Jesus declared of the unbelieving Jews, (John viii. 44,) “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.” This was their true character, because not a single transgression, but the habit of their lives, the course of their hearts, was opposed to the righteousness of God. And such is the test by which we are to judge of character.

10. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*

11. *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.*

12. *Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.*

Profession, therefore, avails nothing; knowledge avails nothing; inward persuasion avails nothing, if contradicted by the testimony of the life: if the habits of life are not habits of righteousness, if the habit of mind is not a spirit of brotherly kindness, the man is not of *God*. There is no other proof by which the children of God can be distinguished from the children of the devil. Mutual love, in particular, will animate the whole family which is born of God. It was the sign left by our Lord himself, *the message which they heard from the beginning*; “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye have love one towards another.”⁶ Cain was *of that wicked*

⁶ John xiii. 34.

one, and his character was marked by hatred: *he slew his brother*. Christians are of God, and their character is marked by love: they *love one another*. Righteousness has an affinity for righteousness; and therefore there is brotherly love among the children of God; whereas wickedness feels an enmity towards them, like that of Cain, when “he rose up against his brother Abel and slew him. “*His works were evil* ;” and he was filled with enmity against Abel, because *his works were righteous*.⁷

This is one of the many passages which St. John has left us, by which we may prove our own selves. He plainly assures us, that no one who is born of God, and can be reckoned among the number of his children, heirs of his inheritance, can commit allowed sin. He does not say that the child of God is perfect; is without sin: “for if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.” But this he affirms; that a habit of sin, and a state of grace, cannot exist together. *He that committeth sin, is of the devil*, and not of God.

And he affirms farther, that there will not only be the absence of unrighteousness, but the presence of righteousness. He that *doeth* righteousness is righteous. Not he who approves and admires it, but he who practises it. Wickedness is active. Cain’s fiendish enmity showed itself by his deed. And righteousness must be active: prove itself in all those ways by which the bent of the heart is shown. Thus the purpose of the Son of God will be

⁷ Gen. iv. 8.

fulfilled, which was *to destroy the works of the devil*, and to introduce, instead, “*whatsoever things are true, and honest, and just, and lovely:*”⁸ things approved of God, and profitable to men.

LECTURE LXVI.

BROTHERLY KINDNESS THE CHARACTERISTIC OF CHRISTIANS.

1 JOHN iii. 13—17.

13. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*

14. *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*

15. *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*

The Gospel finds men in a state of death. “In Adam all died.” It offers restoration. “He that hath the Son, hath life: and he that hath not the Son, hath not life.” The passage from one state to the other, is like the passage from one country to another. There is a gulf which must be crossed. And herein, says St. John, is one sign that we have crossed it, *have passed from death unto life*,¹ *because we love the brethren*. They are not of the world, and the world does not love them. Nay, it is well if it does not hate them. *Marvel not, my brethren,*

⁸ Phil. iv. 8.

¹ μεταβεβηκα μεν.

if the world hate you. The Lord Jesus has disclosed the secret. (John xv. 19.) "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." One who lives for the present world, cannot cherish cordial feelings towards another who lives for a different world. The two belong to a different family; to a different country. As the Lord said to his own brethren; (John vii. 7,) "The world cannot hate you;" there is nothing to excite such enmity: "but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil." We see an example of this hatred in the conduct of the Pharisees towards the man who had been restored to sight: and who had truly said, "If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." (John ix. 33.) "They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out." The same feeling was shown towards Nicodemus; "Art thou also of Galilee?" And thoughts like these lead rapidly on to further signs of hatred, and prove that *he that hateth his brother is a murderer.* "The chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus to death: because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus." ²

But the same course of thought and feeling which affected the unbelieving Jews with hatred, would affect the Christians with love and kindness. They are those who are baptized into the same faith, and call upon the same Lord as ourselves. They have

² John xii. 11.

renounced the world : are proceeding with us on the same journey : are fellow travellers towards a heavenly kingdom. Let us help one another on the way ; and by mutual sympathy, by "bearing one another's burthens," smooth difficulties and comfort sorrows.

And the consciousness of this brotherly feeling towards the followers of Christ, because they are his followers, is a sign of that state of heart which belongs to genuine faith. If I feel my kindly affections strongly drawn towards the relations and friends of an individual, it must be because I love that individual. If the home, the spot is dear to me where one has lived, for no other reason than because it was the spot in which he used to linger and the home in which he delighted, this can only be because that person is highly valued and dearly regarded by me. And so if I love the brother Christian who is working out his salvation in the world, for no other reason than because he is a brother Christian, I have an evidence in my own heart of an interest in Him, who is our common Saviour. Union of interest with my christian neighbour, is union of interest with my christian neighbour's Lord. And to have that interest, is to *have passed from death unto life*: to have been taken out of a country of desolation and destruction, to a country of security and peace. For Christ himself declared, (Matt. x. 41,) "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall

give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

But all these are active, manifest signs of love. And the apostle, having spoken thus strongly of love towards the brethren, will not leave it doubtful what he means by that love. Not merely a feeling which leads to no exertion, or evaporates in words: but charity which is energetic and self-denying: even like that love "which passeth knowledge," the love of Christ towards man. To that love we are directed, as our pattern, our standard.

16. *Hereby perceive we the love of God,³ because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

By this we know the nature, we perceive the degree of real love, by the example which Christ has given. We ought to be animated by a like feeling, if we really love. *We ought to be prepared to lay down our lives for the brethren.* For such was the love of him who truly loved us. He showed that greatest of all proofs of love, that he laid down his life for his friends. But if we ought to do that which is greatest, what shall be thought of one who refuses to do that which is least?

17. *But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*

What portion has such an one of that love, which dwelt in God the Father, when he sent his only

³ In the Greek, hereby perceive we *love*. By this we understand the nature and extent of genuine love, in the example of it which *he* (*ἐκεῖνος*, Christ) has given.

begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins? Or which dwelt in God the Son, when he gave his life a ransom, and was bruised for our iniquities?

Take example from the well-known case of that rich man, who allowed Lazarus to remain at his gate hungry and full of sores, whilst living himself in luxury and abundance. ⁴ When God saw the case of all mankind to be such in regard to the soul, as the case of Lazarus in regard to the destitution of the body, he was moved with compassion towards them, and provided a way for their redemption. That was love. And what was there like this, in the neglect, the indifference of the rich man? *How dwelt the love of God in him?*

Take example, again, from the history of the man who “fell among thieves,” and was left by the wayside, wounded and half dead. ⁵ A priest and a Levite saw him lying in that condition, and passed by on the other side. *How dwelt the love of God in them?* What was there of that love which the Lord Jesus showed, when he left the bosom of the Father, and took upon him our nature, that he might “heal our sicknesses, and bear our infirmities?”

This, then, is real love: so it shows itself, so it exerts itself. And if any man *seeth his brother have need*, sees him oppressed by wants which he is capable of relieving, and refuses thus to employ his means, how dwelleth in him that principle of love which belongs to God, and which ought to dwell in him, if he is a disciple of Christ? As a disciple of Christ, he is made “partaker of the divine nature.” As a disciple of Christ, he is to be merciful, even as

⁴ Luke xvi. 19—21.

⁵ Ib. x. 30, &c.

his Father who is in heaven is merciful." If it is not so with him, he is not "of God." He has not *passed from death unto life*, for he does not *love the brethren*.

This passage should lead to serious consideration. *Hereby we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren*. There is, then, such a change: and such a change is to be *known*: and to be known, not merely by any outward rite or covenant, but by the state of our hearts, and the practice growing out of it. For only "he that loveth, is born of God, or knoweth God."⁶ Whosoever is born of God, is taught of God. And all they who are taught of God, are taught to love one another.

LECTURE LXVII.

GROUNDS OF THE CHRISTIAN'S CONFIDENCE.

1 JOHN iii. 18—24.

18. *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*

19. *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.*

20. *For if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.*

⁶ ch. iv. 7; 1 Thess. iv. 9.

St. James has shown us by a plain example, what it is to *love in word and in tongue*, and not *in deed and in truth*. It is to say to a brother or sister, who may be “naked, and destitute of daily food,¹ Depart in peace, be ye warmed, be ye filled: notwithstanding ye give them not those things” by which they might be filled or warmed. And in those days Christians must have been often called upon to relieve actual necessity in their brethren: who, because they were brethren, because they were Christ’s disciples, had been deprived of their means of livelihood, and forfeited the assistance of their own friends. When they were willing to perform this duty, and deny themselves for the sake of others, then they had a proof that their love was real: existed not *in word*, but *in deed*. When the mother hangs over the bed of her sick child, and, whilst she is ministering to its wants or wishes, forgets her repose, it is because she loves. When the son repays a parent’s care, supports his failing strength, and comforts his declining years, it is because he loves. It is real love which undergoes labour, foregoes comfort, endures watchfulness, submits to privations. Therefore, when this is done, there is a proof that love is sincere, and springs from an inward principle. As the proof of health and strength is not the beauty of the person alone, or the fair proportion of the limbs, but their ability to perform the functions for which they were intended; so the proof of love is not the gentle word or the smooth tongue, but the kind and self-denying deed. And when the love of the brethren for the

¹ ii. 16.

sake of Christ is real, it is, farther, a proof that faith in Christ is real. To love the servant, is to love the master. *Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.* When we examine ourselves, as we ought constantly to examine ourselves, and inquire into our state in God's sight: hereby we may be persuaded of the consolatory fact, that we are Christ's indeed: "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." If, indeed, our heart misgives us, when we look for such proof: and is conscious that though there have been fair words, there has been nothing else; nothing done to prove the sincerity of such words: then there can be no such assurance: no neglect, no selfishness, no unsparing or unforgiving spirit can be known to our own consciences, which is not better known to God. *God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.* Whereas, on the other hand,

21. *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.*

22. *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

23. *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.*

24. *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he has given us.*

Three important truths are set before us here. First,

1. There may be a confidence before God. It is

happy that we have this assurance: that we possess the means of judging concerning our spiritual state. Could we endure to know that there is a future tribunal; that on the issue of that tribunal eternity depends; a blessed, or a miserable eternity: could we endure to know this, and not to know our prospects at such a trial? And therefore St. John tells us to examine ourselves, that we may *know that we are of the truth*, and so *assure our hearts before him*. Our conscience, our understandings, are given for this purpose: that looking into ourselves, and comparing ourselves with the standard set up for our guidance, we may *have confidence before God*.

2. He next speaks of the blessed result of this state. *Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight*. If a man “regards iniquity in his heart, the Lord will not hear him.” But “his eyes are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers.” What they ask “in faith, nothing wavering:”² what they “ask according to to his will,”³ they *receive of him*. They are the children, the dutiful children, of a gracious parent: who does not, for lack of will, deny what he knows to be expedient for them, nor refuse what he would gladly grant, for want of power.

3. But as this confidence is of all things the most important, there must be a ground for it; more especially since it is certain that the hearts of many have not condemned them, when they were really

² James i. 6.

³ ch. v. 14.

guilty before God, and had no right to confidence. The heart of Paul did not condemn him, when he persecuted the christian name: and haling the believers, both men and women, cast them into prison. He himself tells us, that he “did it ignorantly:”⁴ not knowing what he did. The heart, therefore, must be brought to a certain standard, that it may be judged of and examined. The hearts of many are at ease, when they live according to the practice which prevails around them, and maintain the habits in which they have grown up, which yet may be very far from *pleasing in God's sight*. Some of those whom the Lord represents as rejected by him, in his description of the judgment-day, appear to be taken by surprise. They expostulate, and entreat to be admitted. “Lord, open to us.”⁵

But need they have been disappointed, and ought they to have been surprised? There is enough in this single passage to have set them right, and convinced them of their real state.

They, it appears, believed in Christ: professed to have received the message which God had revealed to the world. So far it was well. *This is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ*. But this is not all. It is also his commandment, that *we love one another*. And of those who are set on the left hand, and “shut out from the presence of the Lord,” we are expressly told that “they saw their brethren hungred, and athirst, and strangers, and naked, and sick, and in prison, and did not minister unto them.”⁷

⁴ 1 Tim. i. 13.⁵ Matt. xxv. 11.⁶ Ib. 44.

While, therefore, St. John affirms that we *may have confidence before God*, that our hearts may enjoy a state of comfortable assurance, he is very particular in repeating the grounds of that assurance. *He that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in him, and he in him: and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* When the Spirit which renews and purifies the hearts of God's faithful people, produces the required effect, and directs our lives in the way of his commandments, then we may have confidence. *Hereby we know that he abideth in us.* His Spirit works in us the disposition to fulfil all his will. And when our consciences bear witness that such is the desire of our hearts and the endeavour of our lives, then *have we confidence before God.*

Observe, however, that though this is a confidence which *may* be enjoyed, we are not told that it *must* be enjoyed. The great object is to *be* secure: not to *feel* secure. *God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.* He may often see the faith which he best approves, and the love which he most rewards, in some meek and contrite spirit which shrinks from his judgments, which "trembles at his word," which "smites upon the breast, and dares not so much as to lift up the eyes towards heaven," except to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner."⁷

⁷ Luke xviii. 13.

LECTURE LXVIII.

FALSE TEACHERS TO BE DISCERNED AND
AVOIDED.

1 JOHN iv. 1—6.

1. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*

A duty is here prescribed, and a reason for it. The duty is, that we *believe not every spirit* that may pretend to instruct or guide; but prove and examine them, whether they teach what is *of God*: agreeable to his word. The reason is, that there will always be many to deceive. *Many false prophets are gone out into the world.*

We have an adversary, the devil, who delights to destroy the souls of men as much as Christ to save them. Goodness is his abomination: and he sees it with malice and enmity. He showed in the wilderness what he would have done, if his power had been equal to his malice. But it was then proved, that *greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world.* Still he lies in wait to deceive: still he contends against that which he cannot overthrow: still he is permitted to corrupt what is good, to pervert what is true, to disseminate error, to dis-

figure the fair beauty of the Gospel. "Lord, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? An enemy hath done this."¹

Hence it comes, that *many false prophets have gone out into the world*; many who mislead the souls which they pretend to guide. To escape their errors, we are warned to *try the spirits, whether they be of God*: to employ our reason, our judgment, our faculties, those powers with which God has gifted us, in order that we may know how "to refuse the evil, and choose the good." Rightly using these, we are to discover the falsehood of teachers who would put "bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter: darkness for light, and light for darkness."² "For if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?"³ If that which should enlighten the soul, and conduct it through the wilderness of this world, is really a false and erroneous principle, how sad the end? The man who trusts and follows it, is hastening towards an unsuspected precipice, is hanging on the edge of destruction.

Here then is our duty, a duty which God expects us to perform, and has given us the means of fulfilling. Because there will be many who bring in false doctrine, and contradict the true faith, *believe not every spirit, every teacher: but try the spirits whether they be of God*, whether they "speak sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness."⁴ We have the means by which to prove and distinguish them.

¹ Matt. xiii. 27.

² Isa. v. 20.

³ Matt. vi. 23.

⁴ 1 Tim. vi. 3.

2. *Hereby know we the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:*

3. *And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.*

This was the heresy of St. John's time. When the Gospel began to prevail, it met with various characters in the different countries to which the apostles went, and, amongst these, with men who had been accustomed to dispute and speculate concerning high matters on which they had no certain knowledge. Like those with whom Paul fell in at Athens: who are described as "spending their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing."⁵ These would not contradict what many around them were receiving: neither would they altogether give up their own conceits and inventions. One of this sort was Cerinthus, an Egyptian, to whose doctrines St. John is supposed to be here alluding. He made a distinction between Jesus, and the Son of God, or Word. As Cerinthus taught, Jesus was a man, the son of Mary and Joseph: the Son of God, the Word, the Christ, was an emanation from God inspiring him. According to this doctrine, the Word was not "made flesh:"⁶ *did not come in the flesh*: God and man were not one person. Jesus was not himself "the light that should come into the world:" but merely bore the light which was conveyed to him. He was not "the true Vine," bearing fruit of himself. Divine fruit was grafted on a human stem. He was not the

⁵ See Acts xvii. 21.

⁶ John i. 14.

fountain of life, the well of salvation, but the channel through which the water of salvation flowed.

This was a fatal error, contrary to the whole system of revealed truth, and destructive of all the hopes on which as Christians we depend. We believe in the forgiveness of sins, because we believe that he who made propitiation for our sins, is himself both God and man: not God inspiring man, but God "made flesh:" and therefore capable of offering a full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction for the sins of all men. To separate Jesus the son of Mary from Christ the Son of God, is to subvert the whole fabric of our faith. And as this was then the dangerous heresy, St. John especially makes it the test of the spirits or teachers, whether they were of God or no. *Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come: and even now already is it in the world.*

The Christians to whom he writes, had been endangered by this error: but they had held firmly to the doctrine of the apostles: and so given proof, that as their teachers were *of God*, so they themselves also were *of God*. "There must needs be heresies, that they which are approved may be made manifest."⁷ These had been made manifest: had shown that they were filled with the Spirit of Christ, and that Satan "could not pluck them out of his hand." He is able to address them in words of comfort and encouragement.

⁷ 1 Cor. xi. 19.

4. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them : because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*

5. *They are of the world : therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.*

6. *We are of God : he that knoweth God heareth us ; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.*

The *spirit of antichrist* is always abroad in the world, but not always in the same form. The article of faith which is now denied, is not that Christ was made man, but that he who was made man, is God. If St. John were now writing, his language would be : Every spirit is of God, which confesseth that he who came in the flesh is God : and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is God is not of God. *This is that spirit of antichrist* against which we have chiefly to contend in this our day. *It is of the world.* It agrees with the common notions of the world, to confess that Jesus Christ was more than man, more than ordinary man :—had more than an ordinary measure of wisdom given him. The world will confess that he was a divine person, in one sense : that he was divinely inspired. This is the language of those who *speak of the world : and the world heareth them.* But that God became man : that he must needs become man, in order to make atonement for sin, and remove the condemnation under which all mankind were lying : this is not the language of the world, and the world heareth it not. Such, however, is the truth of Scripture, which is God's own word. *He that knoweth God, heareth it. He that*

is not of God, heareth it not. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

Hereby we know it, because it agrees with Scripture. But there is also another proof, by which we discover *the Spirit of truth*. We know it by its fruits. It has an effect which *the spirit of error* has not. It sustains the heart in its time of trial. When the tide of life is ebbing, and the present world is receding from the thoughts which it had too long and too much occupied: when eternity is no longer seen through a veil, dimly, but there is “a fearful looking for of judgment” which seems close at hand: then they that *are of the world, and speak of the world*, cannot satisfy or support the fainting mind. That is then felt, which before, perhaps, had been little thought of: how “no man can deliver his brother, or make agreement unto God for him.”⁸ If then Jesus was but man, where is our confidence? But he was God as well as man, and therefore he can deliver. He can make agreement with the Father, “who has delivered all judgment unto the Son.” And in this faith we can repose. “We know in whom we have believed: and that he is able to keep unto the great day that which we have committed to him.”⁹ For He is “the true God, and eternal life.” “He has life in himself, and quickeneth whom he will.” “To him, therefore, as unto a faithful Creator, commit the keeping of your souls.”¹⁰

⁸ Ps. xlix. 7.

⁹ 2 Tim. i. 12.

¹⁰ 1 Pet. iv. 19.

LECTURE LXIX.

THE LOVE OF GOD TOWARDS MAN, AN EXAMPLE
FOR MAN TO FOLLOW.

1 JOHN iv. 7—12.

7. *Beloved, let us love one another : for love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.*

8. *He that loveth not, knoweth not God ; for God is love.*

9. *In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*

10. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

Things which are kind in themselves, may become more kind by the circumstances under which they are done. Any proof of kindness is thought more of, if shown to a stranger by a stranger : by one who is to the other, what the good Samaritan was to the Jew who lay wounded by the way. The case is still stronger, if the benefactor has received an injury. If one has offended another, he least expects a favour from that man. This is St. John's meaning, when he says, *Herein was love : not that we loved God, but that he loved us*. He bids us look into ourselves ; and see how little reason there was

to expect that mercy which he showed, when *he sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

For, surely, it is not the disposition of man to love God: not even of man, redeemed, instructed, invited, warned. If we consult our hearts, we must too surely feel, that the love of God is not born with man, but must be implanted. It is not the first, but the renewed nature. If otherwise, what need of all our exhortation and instruction? If otherwise, we should find children hastening of their own accord to learn his will: delighting in the house of prayer: delighting to offer up their petitions to him at every spare hour: dreading the thought of taking his name in vain: more afraid of offending him, than of anything on earth: we should find all eager to discover his will, and resolved to do it. In short, we should find all, at once, and by nature, such in their character and way of life, as a few become, through the Spirit of God converting their hearts. And these too well know, that such love is not natural to them: nay, that it is the greatest of all proofs of divine love, that, not being natural, it is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost.

Therefore, *herein was love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us.* Or, as St. Paul expresses the same truth, "In this God commendeth his love towards us, in that whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."¹

Here then is a great, acknowledged truth. *God has manifested his love toward us.* And there are two ways in which it may be received. It may be received as a truth to believe, to confess, to specu-

¹ Rom. v. 8.

late upon : or as a truth which may be a motive of action. It may lie on the surface of the mind, as a seed, sometimes, on the surface of the ground, and produce nothing : or it may sink within, and vegetate, and produce fruit : fruit like itself, excellent and salutary.

The intention is, that it should be operative and productive.

11. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

If God so loved us, we ought to show the disposition of which he has set this eminent example. We ought to exercise towards one another, first, a forgiving love. If, whilst we were alienated from him, and unwilling to serve him, he yet *loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins* : he has certainly taught us to forgive a brother who transgresses against us ; and when required to show mercy, to remember how much mercy we have received, and of how much we have daily need. Justly, therefore, has our Lord made a forgiving spirit a test of our state before God ; he has distinctly said, “ If ye forgive not your brother his trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses.”³

And, further, if God so loved us, we ought not only to forgive, but to benefit one another. The love of God, as exercised toward us, sets us an example of active benevolent exertion. His pity was actively engaged. *He sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* He devised a plan which

³ Matt. vi. 14.

should agree with his moral government; not contradict the rules by which he regulates the world; and bring man to happiness, whilst bringing him to obedience.

Thus, whilst he has taught us to *love one another*—*for love is of God, and he that loveth not, knoweth not God*: he has also shown us how to exercise and exhibit that love; not in word alone, not in sentiment alone, but in deed and action.

And, in what follows, the apostle further intimates that this love of our neighbour is in fact the love of God. It is the mode in which our love of God is to be made manifest.

12. *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

It is not immediately evident why that truth comes to be here stated: *No man hath seen God at any time.* But a little reflection discovers the apostle's meaning, and connects one sentence with the other. We cannot show our love towards God, as we would show our love towards a fellow-creature, by mutual intercourse, or by those kind offices which proceed from the feelings of affection. God is far above, out of our reach, and our goodness cannot extend to him. We might doubt whether our love were real, for real love will not be idle; and we might doubt whether we really loved him, for want of occasion to show or prove it. Here, then, is the way in which we may assure our hearts. *If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.* Nothing is then wanting, either in

his love to us, or in our love to him. *It is perfected.*

The principle here laid down, by which God would have our love toward him proved, is the same as that which appears in our Lord's reply to his apostles, when defending Mary for the sign of affection which she had given in pouring upon his head a box of precious ointment.³ They had alleged that it ought to have been bestowed upon the poor. No, the Lord replied, "The poor ye have always with you, and whensoever ye will, ye may do them good. But me ye have not always." The office of love which Mary has now performed, it was fit she should perform; for ye have it not always in your power so to prove your affection. But the poor ye have always with you; and hereafter ye may prove your love to me by benefiting them; by assisting those dear to me; and the kindness ye show, the good ye do to one of the least of my brethren, ye do it unto me. Ye show it unto me, whom ye have not seen, by showing it to your brother whom ye have seen.

Here, then, is the proof that *God dwelleth in us*, if love towards his people dwell in us; and if the spirit which animates our hearts, and directs our practice, is a spirit of forgiveness, and forbearance, and brotherly-kindness, and charity. Such must be the spirit of one who habitually bears in mind, that if he loveth God, it is because *God first loved him*: nay, so loved him, as to *send his Son to be the propitiation for his sins*.

³ Matt. xiv. 7.

LECTURE LXX.

BROTHERLY LOVE THE EFFECT OF THE SPIRIT
OF GOD UPON THE HEART.

1 JOHN iv. 13—16.

13. *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.*

St. John here speaks of the certainty which he enjoyed of God's love and favour, and desires to bring others to the same assurance, on which their hope and comfort must depend. We have a proof, he says, that when we talk of being united to God, of our dwelling in him, of his dwelling in us, we are not speaking words of vanity. *He has given us of his Spirit.* He has given power to us his apostles, which he alone could give; power which we had not in ourselves. And he has given us a mind which is not the natural mind of man; he has changed the desires of our souls; he has put a new disposition in our hearts. *Hereby know we that he dwells in us.* It is a proof of his favour and his presence, like that which he gave to the Israelites as they journeyed through the wilderness. (Numb. ix. 15.) "On the day that the tabernacle was reared up, the cloud covered the tabernacle; and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the

appearance of fire until the morning. So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night." Hereby the Israelites knew that God was with them. And *hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.* "His Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God."¹

This assurance which John felt in himself, he does not keep within himself. He declares it, that others may believe as he believed.

14. *And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.*

This is like the tenor of St. Peter's argument, who says, (2, i. 15,) "I will endeavour after my decease that ye may be able to have these things always in remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." In the same manner John leaves his declaration, *We have seen his glory: and what we have seen, we make known: we do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.* "By him all that believe are justified from all things." By faith, we become partakers of his grace. For this is the message of the gospel; the message which we apostles proclaim,

15. *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.*

He came with an offer of salvation. And whoever believes the message has the salvation which

¹ Rom. viii. 16.

he brings. It is not confined to us apostles. *Who-soever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God: whosoever shall take this faith upon him, and live by it, "the Father will love him, and make his abode with him."*² "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."³ The *confession*, indeed, here spoken of, is not the confession of the creed, but of the life; the confession of the apostle Paul, that "the life which he lived in the flesh, he lived by the faith of the Son of God."⁴ Whosoever thus confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, who came to "give his life a ransom" for those who should consent to be taught, to be guided, to be sanctified by him, and so to receive salvation: he "is a new creature;" an union has taken place which makes him so: *God dwelleth in him, and he in God.*

"Without controversy, great is the mystery," wonderful the miracle of love. But it is not too great or too wonderful to be received as true. It is matter of which we have proof and experience.

16. *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

As much as to say, the conviction which we have in ourselves, and which we express so confidently, we enable you to share. God's love to us *we have known*, and therefore *have believed*. But this love extends beyond us, who as the apostles of Christ

² John xiv. 23.

³ Rom. x. 10.

⁴ Gal. ii. 20.

have tasted its first fruits ; it extends to all who *confess that Jesus is the Son of God*. And all may have the proof of this in themselves, the same proof as we apostles have—by partaking of his nature. It was the purpose of Christ's coming, to make us "partakers of the divine nature."⁵ That nature is love. *God is love: and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

Thus the apostle raises Christians to the highest eminence ; but by steps which all can perceive and judge of. Brotherly kindness and charity is their prevailing temper, if they are indeed "of God;" and in this sense they may say, *Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit*. He has not given the power of healing diseases, or of speaking in various tongues, or of seeing into the hearts of men. But he does give of his Spirit to the disciples of Christ, and one chief quality of that Spirit is love. It is not the natural disposition of man, which is inclined to self-seeking, rivalry, jealousy, strife, malice ; but it is the renewed spirit, the heaven-born disposition, to have that charity which "suffereth long, and is kind: which envieth not, vaunteth not itself, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil."⁶

Therefore, he that *dwelleth in love* has a proof within him that *he dwelleth in God, and God in him*. For we are taught by our great example, what it is to *dwell in love*. He dwelt in love, who "went about doing good:" who used his divine power

⁵ 2 Pet. i. 4.

⁶ 1 Cor. xiii. 5, 6.

most chiefly in showing mercy and pity. He dwelt in love, who wept with those who wept at the tomb of Lazarus; and called back from the grave the widow's only son. He dwelt in love, who, when little children were brought to him, did not disdain the interruption, but took them up in his arms, and laid his hands upon them, and blessed them. He dwelt in love, who rebuked the spirit of his disciples, when they would have called down fire from heaven upon his enemies. He dwelt in love, who prayed for them that were torturing and reviling him, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Such is love—the love of God. Such is the love which we are taught to imitate. For *he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him*. But we are not one with him, or he with us, unless he has *given us of that Spirit*: unless we have been "taught of him" to "live peaceably with all men:" to "be of the same mind one towards another, rejoicing with them that do rejoice, and weeping with them that weep;" to "be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another;" not to be "overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good."⁷ For this is that excellent gift of charity, without which we may indeed "have a name to live," but nevertheless be counted as dead before God.

⁷ Rom. xii. 10—21.

LECTURE LXXI.

THE EFFECT OF PERFECT LOVE IN PRODUCING
PERFECT CONFIDENCE.

1 JOHN iv. 17, 18.

17. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

St. John here states the effect of the love of God and man, of that state of mind to which the Gospel leads, when it is *made perfect*; when it is completely inwrought in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. The full effect of such love is this: that we may look forward to the day of judgment, that day when we shall see God face to face without fear. *Because as he is, so we are in the world.* Because that is removed which caused a difference and a distance between us and God, and therefore made us contemplate the season of meeting him with terror.

By nature we are alienated from God. It was the first consequence of sin. Adam was conscious of sin, and hid himself from the presence of God among the trees of the garden.¹ Whilst he was yet

¹ Gen. iii. 8.

innocent, the presence of God would be his delight and joy ; with sin came fear, the fear of meeting him whom he had offended.

And this is an example of the case of mankind in general. Their natural impulse is to hide themselves from the presence of God. They invent a multitude of devices to exclude God from their thoughts and memory. The mention of him is avoided. The anticipation of that season which must bring them before him is shunned and derided. Few are the companies which would like to be suddenly reminded, "Thou, God, seest us." It is not written up in our places of concourse, our assemblies of business or of pleasure, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of God." To *have boldness in the day of judgment*, or in the expectation of that day, is not the usual state of men.

But the apostle says, *Herein is our love^c made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.* The Gospel has fulfilled its purpose, when God and man are reconciled. It restores to a state of love, those who were before in a state of enmity.

The connexion of parent and child on earth may furnish an example. Properly, the parent ought to love the child, and the child the parent. But the disobedient child has no such love: and regards the parent with terror, or perhaps aversion. His feeling is like that of Adam. He would hide himself from the presence which he knows that he has reason to fear.

In such a case, the first effect of change of heart in the offending child would bring back the affection towards the father: would carry him into his

^c τετελειωται ἡ ἀγάπη μεθ' ἡμῶν.

presence, saying, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."

The Gospel does the same. It attracts us to love God, because he has first loved us. And when that object is effected, *herein is love made perfect*, and there is no more fear. We are enabled to keep the first and great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy mind, and all thy soul, and all thy strength." The ground of fear is removed, which is a consciousness of difference, of unlikeness. When *as he is, so we are in the world*, there is no unlikeness, and therefore no servile fear. For that fear arises out of our knowing that we ought to "be holy, as he is holy;" but that, on the contrary, we are not cleansed from all pollution of flesh and spirit, and therefore are little fitted to appear before God. We have the mind by which St. Peter was affected, when he was suddenly made conscious of the divine person in whose presence he was standing, and exclaimed, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."³

But can this be? That *as he is, we should be*?
How far can this likeness extend?

In one respect alone can man resemble God. When he approves what God approves, and strives to conform his character to what he knows to be God's will. Naturally, the case is just otherwise. We desire what God forbids, we dislike what he commands. In this consists that struggle of the flesh against the spirit, which is the perpetual distress and

³ Luke v. 8.

difficulty of the children of God. But when the affections are set on things above; when the world is regarded first and chiefly as the place in which we are to be prepared for heaven: when, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we cultivate the fruits of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance:" then there may be communion: though there can be no resemblance in nature, there is an agreement in principle; and an anxious aspiration towards that time, when there will be no remaining difference or opposition, and the soul "made perfect" will be *as God is*, fully renewed after the divine image.

In proportion as we approach that image now, and *love is perfected in us*, we are able to overcome that fear of God and judgment by which the unconverted heart is held in bondage.

18. *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

Such is the case with perfect love. *Perfect love casteth out fear.* Happily, love may exist where there is still a remainder of fear. In this respect there is no sure or universal rule. It is not always with the sincerest Christian, as it was with the apostle Paul, when arriving at the end of his course he could exclaim, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."* This full assurance is not necessary to our safety, or even to our comfort:

* 2 Tim. iv. 6. 8.

neither is it always granted. It is given, as talents are given, to every man "according to his several ability." Some persons, and some conditions, require cordials: others rather need to be restrained and cooled. Joseph, for example, lying for two years in prison as the effect of his faithfulness, and the same Joseph afterwards raised to honour, and enjoying the full tide of worldly prosperity, would not require the same treatment. When for righteousness' sake he was suffering, and his lot was all darkness without, his spirit would need to be raised within him by a lively sense of God's favour. The case was very different, when he was entrusted with power and wealth. It might be then requisite to chasten him with godly fear. He might have less spiritual comfort; but he would not have less spiritual security. Conviction of safety is no more needful to safety in the case of the soul, than of the body: where those complaints are the most dangerous, in which the patient is least aware of danger, and is confidently anticipating recovery.

The first aim therefore must be, not to banish fear, but to remove the cause of fear: to pay attention to the root of the disease, before we allay its symptoms.

And such is the apostle's own course here. He describes the love which should animate the Christian. He represents it in all its effects towards God and man. He exhorts us to cultivate this spirit, till it becomes a part of our nature: dwells within us. And then he comes to say, *Herein is our love perfected, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment: for perfect love casteth out fear.* When

the Lord directs the heart into perfect love, there may be “the patient waiting for Christ.”⁵ For “hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.”

LECTURE LXXII.

THE LOVE TOWARDS GOD IS SHOWN BY LOVE TOWARDS MAN.

1 JOHN iv. 19—21.

19. *We love him, because he first loved us.*

It is proper that love should be returned by love. And so if we have any real love of God in our hearts, it must be referred back to his love towards ourselves. For, first, if he had not sent his Son into the world to give us acquaintance with himself, we should have been in darkness even until now. There can be no love where there is no knowledge. “And no man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.”¹ And, again, if he had not sent his Holy Spirit to carry the knowledge and love of him to our hearts, in the midst of light we should have still remained in darkness. We should have been as those, and they are too many, who “do not like to retain him in their knowledge,

⁵ See 2 Thess. iii. 5.

¹ Matt. xi. 27.

and are given over to a reprobate mind.”² Yes, Lord, true it is, that if we do “know Thee, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent,” not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the praise! We could not have *loved thee*, if thou hadst not first *loved us*!

But do we love God? Love him in deed and in truth? Of this there must be some proof, some evidence. If we love God, we shall love the creatures of God. If we feel rightly towards the Father, we shall be moved with a kindly affection towards the children.

20. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

In beholding man, he beholds the image of his Maker: and this image, even if defaced, he ought to respect and honour. But still more, in beholding christian man, he sees a brother: a child of the same family; and if he do not so regard him, how can he be actuated with love towards God himself? As the apostle says afterwards, “Every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.”³

The justness of this may be perceived by an example. Let a man profess great esteem and thankfulness towards a benefactor who has done him service, and is now absent in a distant land. Let him see the children of that benefactor, who remain at home; and lest he should mistake them, let the

² Rom. i. 28.

³ Ver. 1.

lineaments of the father be marked strongly on their countenance, or, still more, the features of that character, which he had so much reason to esteem and admire, be reflected in their manners. For so it will be with the christian brother, who sets God before him, and follows him as an example. If the man takes no interest in these children; treats them as persons with whom he has no concern; has no sympathy with their joys or their sorrows; has no disposition to assist them in their difficulties, or to rejoice with them in their prosperity;— shall we say that his boasted love of their absent father is real? Does he not speak falsely when he pretends it? If he loved the parent who is now far removed from his reach, would he not show regard to the children who are before his eyes?

So, then, our love towards *God whom we have not seen*, must be manifested by our love towards *our brother whom we have seen*. It is the natural consequence of grateful affection; the proper test by which sincerity must be tried.

But, further still, it is the solemn injunction of him whose name we bear, and whom we profess to follow as our guide.

21. *And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.*

“This is my commandment,” he said, “that ye love one another.”⁴ “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples,” that ye have been brought

⁴ John xv. 12.

by my teaching to the knowledge and favour of God, "if ye have love one towards another."⁵

It is true, we cannot *love*, strictly speaking, that is, we cannot have the feeling of love excited in our hearts, merely because we are commanded to love. It is not the nature of that affection to be produced by command. But we may show the signs, and do the works of love. We may perform as a duty those services which the feeling of affection would spontaneously fulfil. This, indeed, is required, even towards those who are not *brethren*: even towards enemies and persecutors. The martyr Stephen could not feel towards the men who were blaspheming the name which he revered, and who were compassing his own death, the affection with which he would regard his christian brethren who were standing by. But he could do what love would dictate. He could desire all that the warmest affection could desire. He could say, "Father, lay not this sin to their charge."⁶ In the same manner every Christian will abound in the works of love, though he cannot feel towards all men as Jonathan felt towards David, when he "loved him as his own soul."⁷ It is not this kind of affection which is commanded. But it is that sort of affection which the Samaritan displayed towards the wounded traveller, when he saw him lying by the wayside. He treated him as if he had been his friend or his brother. He did what his means allowed, and the occasion required; and so doing he fulfilled the

⁵ John xiii. 35.

⁶ Acts vii. 60.

⁷ 1 Sam. xviii. 3.

commandment which enjoins, that *he who loveth God, love his brother also.*

Nothing is wanting to remedy the worst and saddest evils which affect our world, except that this commandment were generally observed. Then would there be no calamity without its appropriate relief. Then there would be no indigence without the aid of charity ; no sickness without attendance and care ; no sorrow without the comfort of sympathy. Then there would be no fatherless neglected, no widows unvisited in their affliction. Then there would be no ignorance untaught, no vice or carelessness unwarned. If the love of God were general, so would be the love of man. And if the love of man were general, and each did for his neighbour what God desires to have done, and what love would incline to do, then the world would be no longer a wilderness, nor man's path through it along a vale of tears.

LECTURE LXXIII.

THE NATURE OF FAITH IN CHRIST.

1 JOHN v. 1.

1. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God : and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.

In this remarkable passage, (for so it would ap-

pear if we read it now for the first time,) a certain class of persons is excepted out of the mass of mankind, and represented as *born of God*. In many respects all men are alike. All are naturally corrupt, and prone to sin; all by nature liable to disease and death; and, in one sense, all are God's children. As Creator, he is Father of all mankind. But here among those who are in such respects alike, a difference is made by the apostle, who declares, not concerning every man, but concerning that man, whoever he be, who *believeth that Jesus is the Christ*, that he is *born of God*.

Surely they to whom this truth is revealed will inquire into themselves, and ask, "Lord, is it I?" Have we the mark and character of thy children?

It would seem, at first sight, that this character must be easily discovered. Does a man believe that Jesus is the Christ? The fact presented to us appears extremely simple. It is known that from the earliest times God had revealed a merciful design of repairing the evil which Adam's sin had caused. He had afterwards expressly promised that a Deliverer should be born of Abraham's race, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. This promise was often alluded to and repeated in different stages of the Jewish history. And such a deliverer was universally expected by that nation and those connected with it. So that persons are described in the gospels as "looking for the redemption of Israel;" as "waiting for the consolation of Israel." Even the Samaritans, who had been long separated from the Jews, and had no part of the Jewish scriptures except the writings of Moses,

even they cherished this expectation. For the Samaritan woman with whom our Lord discourses in John iv. answers to him, "I know that Messiah cometh, who is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things." The angels, likewise, who announced to the Jewish shepherds the birth of Jesus, speak as of a thing familiar to their minds, and say, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." And the aged Simeon, when the infant was presented in the temple, acknowledges the accomplishment of what he had been expecting, and not of a thing new and strange, and says, "Lord, *now* lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, *according to thy word.*"

The promise of God was kept, the prophecies fulfilled, and the expected deliverer came, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Our Lord answered the woman of Samaria, when she declared her belief that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: "I that speak unto thee am he."¹

In Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he referred to the prophecies describing the Messiah; and then fastened the eyes of all upon himself by announcing, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."² So that Andrew remarks to his companion, Simon Peter, "We have seen the Messiah." And Philip says to Nathanael, "We have found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."³ And when various reports were raised concerning Jesus, and

¹ John iv. 26.

² Luke iv. 21.

³ John i. 45.

some affirmed one thing, and some another, the apostles confidently declared, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."⁴

Such is the fact to be believed. It is no new thing to us. We are constantly asserting that we believe it. We have no reason to doubt of it. When, indeed, our Lord was himself on earth; when his kingdom answered so ill to the common expectation of the Jews; when he went about with a few ordinary men as his followers, and had not where to lay his head; it might then be a question of doubt whether he was the Messiah; whether he who had no beauty that men should desire him, could be the same whose "name was to be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace."⁵ Only the mighty works that he did, only the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, could persuade men that he *was the Son of God*. But to us it presents no such difficulty. And though to the Jewish nation "the veil still remains untaken away,"⁶ and they still look for a deliverer whose kingdom shall be of this world, we only wonder at their blindness, and are all ready to give assent to the fact, that *Jesus was the Christ*.

Is it then on a simple assent to this fact, that all the great privileges are suspended which are covenanted to those *born of God*?⁷ "If children, then heirs—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ?" Can we suppose that all who do not, like unbelieving Jews, deny that Jesus is the Messiah, are, indeed,

⁴ Matt. xvi. 13.

⁵ Isa. ix. 6.

⁶ Cor. iii. 14.

⁷ Rom. viii. 17.

in a spiritual sense, members of Christ—are truly, in a scriptural view, children of God—are entitled to the inheritance of heaven ?

Happy indeed would it be, if we could suppose this. We might then look round upon our friends and neighbours, upon the inhabitants of this country, and of Christendom at large, with eyes of great satisfaction. For there are but few of these, who have not a general belief that Jesus was the Christ. At least, they have no intention of denying it: and would commonly be offended, if any one expressed a doubt of their assent to it.

Indeed, we often find at last that many have believed the fact, who have lived with no serious thoughts concerning it, and no sense of the obligations arising out of it. We frequently have a proof in the end, that although by the neglect of his commands they have been “ crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame,” they had yet a secret belief that “ truly this was the Son of God.” For when the shadows of this world are passing away, and the light of an immortal existence is breaking in upon them, they summon the ministers of Christ, and now seek the benefit of his redemption: they claim the sacrament which commemorates his death, and fly to an outward ceremony, to prove that they desire to die as Christians, though they lived as those who did not believe that *he was the Christ*.

This shows that the belief in Jesus of which the apostle is here speaking, is not the same thing as such a belief as this: and that merely to have such a belief, does not prove any one to be born of God. Indeed,

St. John himself testifies it. For he expressly says, that "Many of the chief rulers *believed in Jesus*:"⁸ but "did not confess him" through fear of others. They *believed that Jesus is the Christ*. His doctrines, his miracles, proved it to them. But St. John would not say of these, that *they were born of God*. In the Acts, again, we are told that the magician Simon *believed*,⁹ seeing the works which Peter was enabled to perform, and was baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Yet was he not *born of God*. Peter assures him, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God."

The belief, therefore, which is implanted by the Spirit of God in the heart of his children, when they are said to be *born of Him*, is a very different thing from the belief of a fact recorded in history. To believe *that Jesus is the Christ*, in the sense here meant, is to believe that he was designed of God from the beginning for the salvation of mankind: commissioned as the Redeemer of a sinful and condemned race: the author of eternal life to those who without him were heirs of eternal death. This SAVIOUR Jesus came to be: and to believe in him, is to receive him as such; to embrace as the only hope, and stay, and refuge, his offer of salvation.

Consider, then, and analyse the state of mind of one who thus believes.

Whoever accepts another as a Saviour, renounces all reliance on himself, and places himself in other hands. He who is delivered by the ransom which another pays, owes his freedom to that

⁸ John xii. 42.

⁹ Acts viii. 13.

other. He who looks towards eternal life as another's gift, disclaims any power, any merits of his own as the procuring cause of what he seeks elsewhere. And so the believer in Christ. He looks towards himself, and he looks towards heaven : and he sees one so utterly unworthy of the other, that he cannot abide the contemplation. He looks into himself, and he raises his thoughts to God : but how great the distance, how wide the separation ! God is "the High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity." And what is he, in the sight of such a being ? Yet he is something. For God is his almighty Creator. And has he lived with that Creator, as a grateful, affectionate, and obedient child ? God is his omniscient Governor. And has he made the laws of that Governor his rule, and walked before Him in righteousness and holiness ? Alas ! how just the language of the prophet ! A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master. If God then be a Father, where is his honour ? and if he be a Master, where is his fear ?"¹⁰ But this neglected Father, and this dishonoured Master, is still his all-seeing Judge. And how shall he abide his coming ? How shall he answer the first and plainest question which may be asked him, "Hast thou loved the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy mind, and all thy strength ? hast thou loved thy neighbour as thyself ?"

He that so believes in Jesus, as to be *born of God*, has set this question before his mind. He knows that he must some time or other answer it : and that now is the season to secure his advocate, and agree with his adversary : and not when the judgment is

¹⁰ Mal. i. 6.

begun, and the books opened, the books of life and death. Now then he has examined his own case: has felt the truth of Scripture, which stops every mouth, and "concludes all under sin:"¹ and he thankfully (and yet how unthankfully, compared with the greatness of the mercy! still with the best thanks he has, he) accepts eternal life as the gift of God through Jesus Christ, who bestows what he had forfeited, who offers that which he could never earn.

But the rightly believing that Jesus is the Christ, is the one important thing. For *he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God*. We must therefore look further into it, and not be satisfied too soon.

I have intended to describe the state of mind in which Jesus is so believed in. Now if I have described it truly, those who at different times have rejected Christ Jesus, would not have this state of mind: and those who have received him, will have been brought to renounce dependence on themselves, and to lean on Him.

1. Look, first, towards those who have not believed in Christ.

In John v. 39, our Lord reasons with the Jews around him. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." Here the Jews are spoken of, as expecting eternal life, and thinking that they had it in the Scriptures: but not rightly interpreting the Scriptures, and therefore not having

¹ Gal. iii. 22.

eternal life, because they would not come unto him who is the author of it. Ye will not come unto ME, that ye might have life. Ye will not seek the appointed door, or ye might enter in. Ye will not wash in the right fountain, or ye might be healed. Ye are among those of whom it was said, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

In John viii, our Lord is again discoursing in presence of many Jews, some of whom believed, and some believed not. And he says to them, "If ye continue in my word, ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."²

Now his saying, that they should come to the knowledge of the truth, and should be made free, offended some of his hearers. It implied that they were still ignorant, and still in bondage. And they would not allow this: for this would have been renouncing self-confidence. "They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man. How sayest thou then, We shall be made free?" How sayest thou, that we need anything which we have not now, and which thou canst give us?

Jesus answered, Ye do need something which ye have not of yourselves; ye need to be delivered from sin. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." You may boast of freedom: but the Son, "the Lamb of God, who came to take away the sin of the world," he alone can make you free indeed.

Again, of these same Jews St. Paul is arguing, in the Epistle to the Romans.³ And he expressly

² John viii. 32.

³ Rom. x. 1—4.

says, that they lost the blessing offered them, because they obstinately persisted in trusting to themselves, and would not rely on Christ Jesus. "I bear them record," he says, "that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." (They believe in God, they own him as Creator, Preserver, but they will not humble themselves before him, and accept his mercy.) "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

They went about to establish their own righteousness. They would not renounce self-dependence. They would not humble themselves, that they might be exalted; but they would exalt themselves, and so they remained abased before God.

The Epistle to the Galatians is entirely directed to the same argument. But it would be wearisome to point this out at length: and I will bring only one more example, from the third chapter of Revelation. It is the more important, because it relates to those who professed themselves Christians. The Spirit here is rebuking the Christians of Laodicea: and says, in the name of Christ: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy

nakedness do not appear.”⁴ Observe the failure of these people. They trusted in themselves: they said, we have need of nothing. Observe what their feeling ought to have been: that they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Observe how they might be rich. Buying of Christ gold tried in the fire. Observe how they might be clothed in the white garments of salvation: putting on the righteousness of Christ: i. e. going out of themselves for wealth to depend on, and for dress to appear in before God; and instead of the nakedness and poverty of their own hearts and doings, taking to themselves “the unsearchable riches of Christ,” and arraying themselves in that “righteousness which is unto all and upon all them that believe.”

We have seen, then, that the error of those who did *not* “believe that Jesus was the Christ,” was the error of depending on themselves. The error of the unhumbled, unsubdued, self-confident, self-justifying heart, which trusts in itself, that it is righteous.

2. Let me now show that those who did receive him, were the reverse of all this. Their state of mind was humble: their spirit contrite: their heart despairing and self-condemning: saying within itself, God be merciful to me a sinner.

We know, for example, the penitent thief’s mind. He acknowledged his sinfulness. We, indeed, (he says to his companion,) “we justly suffer this condemnation.” He threw himself upon the mercy and power of Christ, at a time when to trust in it,

⁴ Rev. iii. 17.

seemed to be "hope against hope." "Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." And to him was the blessed sentence uttered, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Again, we know the mind of those who formed the first assembly of believers in Christ. The account is found in Acts ii. "Know this," says St. Peter to his countrymen, "let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. 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?" It is the language of those who feel themselves convicted, without excuse or hope, and are ready to receive any conditions that are offered them. "What shall we do?" And in that state of self-abandonment, they embrace the offer made them. There is yet a way, in which ye may "save yourselves from this untoward generation. Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. Then they that gladly received his word, were baptized." Three thousand souls were added to the number of believers. Three thousand souls were added to the number of those who, being weary and heavy laden, had taken refuge in Christ, and laid on him their burthen, and found rest unto their souls.

Going on to Acts xvi., another example meets us, in the person of the governor of the prison at Philippi, into which Paul and Silas had been cast. It pleased God on that occasion to interpose his power, in favour of his servants. 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." Mercy was intended here, for one who had more need of it than Paul. It is sometimes easier to shake the solid rock, or the lofty castle, than to shake the heart of a wicked man. But this man's heart was shaken, and he was soon to be released from heavier chains than those with which he had bound his prisoners. "He sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved ?"

Here, then, was the same spirit—humble, broken, self-renouncing, ready to accept any terms. "And they said, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord." Explaining to him, no doubt, how God, in pity to a case like his, which was the case (in substance) of all the world, had sent his only Son, and laid on him the iniquity of all, that as many as believe in him may be accounted righteous for his sake, and be delivered from the wrath to come. In that state of mind he was baptized, he and all his, straightway. He had asked, "Whither shall I go for safety?" He had been directed to Christ Jesus. And straightway he received him as the author of salvation.

I shall proceed no further in examples, except to bring to your recollection how anxiously and universally St. Paul cherishes the feeling of dependence upon Christ Jesus, and of worthlessness and helplessness in ourselves. He constantly reminds the

Christians to whom he was writing, that "by grace they are saved, not of works, lest any man should boast;" that they are "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;" that "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified before God;" that "by grace they were saved, through faith, and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God;" that "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ;" who "is made unto us of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." And in urging this, he only desired to imbue them with that spirit which he felt himself, and in which he found that peace which passeth all understanding. For he had once depended on something very different from the free grace of God: he had satisfied himself, because "touching the righteousness which is of the law, he was blameless."⁵ But what things were gain to him, what he once valued himself on, these he "counted loss for Christ." "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: that I may win Christ, and 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:" that righteousness which God, by the gracious covenant of the Gospel, imputes to all who *believe that Jesus is the Christ*.

These examples, both of those who had this faith, and of others who had it not, prove what the faith

⁵ See Rom. vii. 9, &c. Phil. iii. 6.

is of those who are *born of God*. They so believe that Jesus is the Christ, as to receive him as their Saviour from eternal death: to receive him as a man who thinks himself dying receives the physician who can restore him: to welcome him as the captive welcomes the deliverer who has brought his ransom: to trust to him, as the sailor to a pilot in the mist, or to an anchor in the storm: to cling to him, as to the "Rock of ages:" to cast themselves upon him, as Noah upon the ark which was to carry him through the deluge, or as the manslayer among the Israelites upon the city of refuge, when the avenger of blood was in pursuit of him. I do not mean that the Christian has continually the feeling of persons in such circumstances. Far otherwise. These are the feelings of persons suddenly seized with alarm, and placed in peril. But the Christian's blessing is, in whatever circumstances, to be "without amazement," to be calm and tranquil. He has peace with God; and being cleansed from his sins, he serves him with a quiet mind. But this is the ground of his peace, and his tranquillity, and his confidence: he has received Christ Jesus, on his own part; and on the side of Christ, he has received in return the privilege of becoming a child of God.

This is the faith which St. John means when he says, that whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. It is divinely wrought in the heart. Those who receive Jesus as the Christ, "are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." How, then,

you will ask, is it to be obtained? Like all other blessings, it must be desired, and sought, and prayed for.

In the first place, it must not be opposed; it must not be opposed by that indifference which makes no provision against the day of account; it must not be opposed by magnifying our own deserts; it must not be opposed by excusing our sins, and laying the blame upon our nature, or on our circumstances, or on the example of other men.

And, further, instead of being opposed, it must be encouraged. Encouraged, by meditating, with the Scripture in our hands, and with prayer upon our lips, on these three things:—First, on the law of God; next, on the agreement of our own heart and life with that law; thirdly, on the cross of Christ. If you realise to yourselves the law of God, as that by which you must be tried—if you examine your hearts, with a view to such a trial—you will thankfully flee to the cross of Christ, and nail your transgressions there. “For by the law is the knowledge of sin.” “But thanks be to God,” who has granted remission of sin to as many as *believe that Jesus is the Christ*. And when that faith is wrought in your heart, as the animating, influencing, directing principle, then you have evidence which can never be disproved that you are *born of God*.

LECTURE LXXIV.

THE EFFECT OF FAITH IN CHRIST, IN OVER-
COMING THE LOVE OF THIS WORLD.

1 JOHN v. 2—4.

2. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

The apostle had said, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." And throughout, he has represented love of the brethren as the sign of a Christian's state. Perhaps the thought occurred to him, that this might lead to self-deceit; and that a man might plead his love for the brethren in excuse for his want of love to God. So he lays down a test by which this error might be corrected. *By this we know that we love the children of God* in that right spirit which God approves, when this love is a part of our whole character, and agrees with it: *when we love God, and keep his commandments.* Then there is a proof that our love of the children of God grows out of our love towards their Father.

So wonderfully does the Spirit of God dive into the recesses of the christian heart. It was foreseen that men would arise who should pride themselves on their love towards their family, or excuse themselves for offences against God, on plea of charity

towards their neighbours. They have neglected the rules of temperance and sobriety: they have not remembered the sabbath-day to keep it holy: they have shown no love of God or of his word: but this at least they cannot be accused of: they have wronged no one—they are in charity with all men. To these St. John addresses himself here. *By this we know that we love the children of God with that true christian feeling which Christ prescribes and God will approve, when we love God, and keep his commandments.* Anything except this is a mere mockery of God; as if the observing one of his laws were to set us free from others. True love is of a very different nature. It is anxious to please, and willing to serve, in everything. Such is love towards a fellow-creature, and such is love towards God.

3. *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.*

His commandments are not burthensome or disagreeable to us. Where love exists, no duties are grievous. How constant and heavy is the labour which a mother suffers with her infant child; yet how willingly do mothers bear it, because they love their children! In the history of Jacob, we read that Laban, Rachel's father, required of him seven years' service before he would give him his daughter Rachel in marriage.¹ And Moses tells us, that "Jacob served Laban seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days, for the love he bore unto her." Thus it is, that to those who love

¹ Gen. xxix. 20.

God, his commandments are not grievous. They are not grievous in themselves. Their reward is with them. And they are not grievous, for the same reason that Jacob's service was not grievous. The motives through which they are fulfilled, the result expected from fulfilling them, lightens all the labour, and repays all the self-denial which they require.

4. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world : and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

There is indeed something in the world which does make the commandments of God grievous, as long as this world continues to exercise power or influence over a man. If things below are the chief objects of desire ; to neglect those things, and resist that desire, must needs be painful. But *that which is born of God overcometh the world.* The true Christian has a principle within him that makes earthly things secondary : overcomes those pleasures, temptations, and desires, which make the commandments of God grievous to any who are not " led by the Spirit of God."

We cannot reflect upon this sentence without perceiving its serious import. The world, in which we live, in which our duties lie, in which our business engages us, of which we form a part, to which our friends and connexions belong,—this world we are to resist—nay, to overcome—on our doing so our hopes depend ; for it is the proof given of our faith, and therefore of our safety, *whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.*

And yet it is completely true, that whoever is born of God, that is, every one who takes Jesus Christ as his Lord and Teacher, and makes it his business to work out his salvation according to the rules of Scripture, finds he has a world to overcome.

For, not to speak now of the love of this world—love of its goods, its honours, its pleasures, which keep back so many from the attention which the soul requires—there is also another great hindrance to be overcome, in “the course of this world.” In every station of life, from the highest to the lowest, from the richest to the poorest, the way of this world is very unlike the way prescribed in Scripture. How many throw off all restraints of religion! despise alike its laws, its threats, its promises! If a man’s lot is cast among such, who will deny that there is much to overcome?

But without speaking of the openly profligate and abandoned, every man, to whatever profession he may belong, in whatever society he may live, when he sets earnestly to the business of his salvation, will find he has something to overcome in the habits of the world around him. Because, though religion may not be altogether despised; though its forms may be observed; though it may be spoken of with respect, as useful to control mankind and restrain their evil passions; still, to speak generally, the way of the world is to do with as little religion as possible, instead of making it the first and great concern: to confine it to the Lord’s day, or to the church: to exclude it from daily use,

and to make other principles the rule of practice. Therefore, no man can serve God as Scripture requires us to serve him ; no man can love God as Scripture requires the love of God to be shown, without opposing in some respects the course of this world. He cannot keep the sabbath indeed holy, “ not doing his own pleasure, or speaking his own words :” he cannot be as constant in private and in domestic prayer : he cannot be as careful to avoid every appearance of evil : he cannot be as circumspect in his practice, and as honest, faithful, and true in all his dealings as religion demands ; without being what is called particular or singular. And why particular, but because the generality do otherwise ? Why singular, if the multitude were not pursuing another way ? One has a business, which demands his time on the Lord’s day ; another follows a vocation which abounds in dishonest practices ; another has a family which occupies his whole time and care ; another has friends and connexions, whom he must not offend, for his prospects depend on them. This is *the world* ; and therefore, whosoever is born of God has a world to overcome. Every age, every station, every trade, every profession, almost every transaction among men has its snare, in the way of common practice, which is too often the allowed practice of something evil. This is the world which is to be overcome.

There is, however, in the faith of Christ, a provision for effecting this purpose. A principle is supplied to accomplish that which must be accom-

plished, if our salvation is to be secured. *This is the victory which overcometh the world; even our faith.*

1. Our faith overcomes the world, first, by showing the danger of the world.

If we believe the Gospel, we believe that we are born with a corrupt nature, condemned in the sight of God: a nature prone to sin, and needing to be renewed after the image which it has lost: for that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

Now the serious belief of this has an immediate effect upon a man's life and practice. It has the same effect upon his habits as the consciousness of a weak constitution has upon the habits of feeble health. One who knows that he has a tendency to some complaint which may prove fatal will avoid whatever might encourage it: will dread the exertion or the climate which may produce it; he will watch himself, and deny himself, knowing that indulgence is death. And so the man who knows that he is inclined to sin, and that “the wages of sin is death,” will avoid whatever might lead to sin, by favouring his corruption. Therefore he needs no specific law which shall point out and name this amusement, and that practice, and such or such gratifications, as things forbidden, any more than one whose limbs are weak needs fetters to restrain them. He knows where his danger lies, and he shuns the companions, the places, the habits, which foster the evil desires of the flesh and of the mind.

And the same principle governs him in what he does, as in what he does not. If he abstains from

all that might favour his natural corruption, he follows whatever may amend it. He is not ingenious to discover reasons why the strictness of the Jewish sabbath is not binding upon Christians; why he may be sparing in his attendance upon public services; why he may abridge his private devotions, or be excused from prayer with his family; because he feels that all the means he can use, and all the motives he can encourage, are no more than needful to keep down the old nature, and stir up the new: and that were he not to continue instant in prayer, were he not to make the sabbath a day holy to the Lord, the evils which he is combating would gain hold upon him, and instead of "growing in grace," he would be "falling back into perdition."

This, then, is the first principle of *our faith*, which gives the victory over the world. "The world lieth in wickedness," and the end of wickedness is eternal misery.

2. But there is a second motive which enables the Christian to overcome the world. There is a better prospect before him. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof." "Nevertheless, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." These promises, these expectations, complete the triumph which a dread of the consequences of a corrupt nature had begun. The Christian places in the one scale this present world, its wealth, its gratifications, its favour: in the other scale he places the honour, and glory, and immortality of which he knows not the exact description, but of which he knows thus much, that

they who have enjoyed the clearest revelation of them have done the most and risked the most for their sake. In this balance, the present world flies up; the heavenly world, the kingdom of God, has a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And every inconvenience, every sacrifice, all the cost of pains and labour, is amply recompensed by the hope which is set before him.

Here, then, in this sentence, we have a test by which true christian faith may be tried and known. Does it overcome the world? *For whatsoever is born of God does overcome the world.* The way of Scripture here may be compared to a commander of ancient times, who marched his troops to an eminence, and showed them the enemy's army in the plain below, and then addressed them in such words as these: "Friends, you see your enemies before you; you have arms in your hands, and if you do not destroy these men, they will destroy you." So Scripture points out to us the world: gives us the whole armoury of FAITH: and bids us overcome the world. If we do not resist the love of the world, the pleasures of the world, the cares of the world, the course of the world, these will destroy us; for these are Satan's troops, and will deliver us into his hands.

But faith does more still. It shows us something beyond the army led by Satan, the host engaged against us. It shows the happy and peaceful plains beyond, and says, If in the strength of Him who is mighty to save, you conquer these enemies, there remaineth no more opposition between the

Spirit and the flesh, no more contest against sin. God has prepared a glorious kingdom, where they who have overcome this present evil world shall suffer no more, neither contend any more: for therein "dwelleth righteousness," and "the wicked cease from troubling."

LECTURE LXXV.

THE METHOD BY WHICH FAITH IN CHRIST
OVERCOMES THE WORLD.

I JOHN v. 5.

5. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

In the preceding verse St. John had stated, that the sincere Christian, the man *born of God*, has a contest to maintain, a victory to achieve: he must oppose and conquer the world in which he lives and moves. Because that world has objects which would divert him from the allegiance he owes to God: objects which he must only follow, as far as they agree with God's commands and are consistent with his service.

This the apostle had said before. Now he proceeds farther, and affirms that the Christian alone does enter upon this contest and obtain this victory.

Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? Such is the hold which the world and the things that are in the world retain over the heart, even when they can no longer please or profit, that all except the followers of Christ Jesus, instead of overcoming the world, by the world are overcome.

Consider such persons: such as are described by the phrase, "children of this generation;" seeking their portion here, and looking for nothing beyond. Take the covetous man, for example: one who is wise in his own conceit, and who pleads that riches purchase comforts and gratifications, and therefore he is seeking riches. Then, in proportion as he has obtained these, and has procured comforts; or in proportion as he grows older, and has less time to enjoy comforts, he will be less and less eager to increase his store. So we might suppose; but it is not so in fact: he does not overcome the world, but the world overcomes him even when it can never profit him. On the brink of the grave he still seeks more of that for which the grave has no use: and employs the last remainder of his strength to grasp some addition to his treasures. This is neither wise nor reasonable: but it is notoriously true. Common sense or reason does not overcome the world.

Observe another class; those who indulge their sensual appetites and passions. See their health declining: their fortune wasted away: their prospects blighted: their conscience stinging them: their hearts wretched, confessedly wretched: so as to envy,

sometimes, the brute animal that sports before them. Yet they proceed in their unhappy course ; sink lower and lower : the impure are hurried away by temptations, against which they have made, perhaps, repeated vows : and the intemperate still lift to their lips the cup, which they own to be the cup of poison. The understanding, alone, cannot conquer passion : or Herod would have put away Herodias. A sense of present evils cannot change the heart, or Pharaoh would have released the Israelites.

The case is much the same with the lovers of what is called pleasure. Day after day they complain of fatigue, of weariness : of the dullness of their amusements and the trouble which they cost : yet they travel the same beaten road : trying from week to week to excite an appetite which is palled, and to satisfy tastes which are insatiable : but not leaving these vanities for things more reasonable, or relinquishing the tracks which they have found so wearisome. Because a new taste, a new desire must be excited, before the old one can be overcome. And these have not that new desire. So that St. John's question is answered by experience, *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* He does not overcome the world, who opposes it by any worldly arguments. The world cannot overcome the world. Nor he who employs against it any carnal weapons. The flesh cannot overcome the flesh. Reason does not overcome it. Reason falls prostrate before passion. Expediency does not overcome it : in spite of certain danger or clear advantage, the force of evil habits

prevails, and the man rushes headlong on foreseen destruction. There is only one power which is able to overcome the world ; *even our faith*.

Because two things are needful, that the victory may be obtained. There must be, both the MOTIVE to attempt it, and the POWER to effect it.

First, there must be motive.

All present things must have great influence over beings constituted like man. And this world is present. Its advantages are seen and felt. And the goods which it possesses and offers, are such as gratify our nature. When it proposes an object to us, there are appetites, passions, inclinations, and tastes within ourselves, which make that object pleasant and desirable. Thus the enemy against which we are to contend, is both powerful in himself, and has an ally within the walls, ready to betray all into his hands. There is " a law in our members warring against the law of God, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin." " That which is born of the flesh, is flesh : " things carnal are congenial to it ; to follow them is the smooth and easy road.

There must, then, be some force, equal to the occasion ; able to conquer the opposite force ; able to resist the influence and subdue the power of the world which would enslave the heart, and of the heart which is disposed towards the world.

Now *he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God*, has such an effectual motive. The Son of God, he who was with God in the beginning, and who was God ; he who is one with the Father, " the brightness of his glory and the express image of his per-

son:" he left "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was," that he might make us the children of God, and exalt us to everlasting life. The Christian says, *This he did for me.* How great must have been my necessity! How grievous my natural state, as a part of that world which is enmity against God, and "lieth in wickedness!" The costliness of the remedy proves the danger of the disease. With this example before my eyes, how can I pursue the things of the world, as the first thing needful; how seek "the friendship of the world" rather than the divine favour; how yield to "the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life," to deliver me from which the Son of God came down from heaven? Men may say, that the end or consequences of sin as revealed in Scripture, that "the worm which dieth not, and the fire which is never quenched, and the blackness of darkness for ever," are words of figurative terror which describe nothing real or substantial. But the Christian argues, Whatever may be concealed under these figures, it was sin which nailed my Saviour to the cross; it was sin which pierced his hands and feet; it was sin which made him melt in speechless agony; it was sin which drew from him his expiring words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And with this living proof, this fact before his eyes, can he venture upon sin, as that which God will not notice, as that which no evil follows? Surely if one believes that Jesus who suffered on the cross is the Son of God, by that cross sin is crucified to him, and he to sin.

Then, again, things resigned, must be resigned for things hoped for. There must be some evidence of things eternal, to loosen our hold from things temporal. *He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God* has such an evidence. He has the evidence, given by him who "spake that which he knew, and testified that which he had seen." And that record is confirmed, as before, by FACT: by the fact of the incarnation, the basis of our faith. Can we doubt the message, which the messenger brought at such a risk, at such a cost? Intelligence might reach our ears, that a valuable possession belonged to us, and that by such or such measures we might secure it to ourselves as our own. And we might doubt the intelligence; disregard it: nay, discard it from our minds. But if we came to learn, that he who brought the information had set out from a distant land; had crossed a tempestuous sea; had suffered the troubles of a tedious voyage; had left all that was dear to him behind; had fought his way through enemies; had risked his life in the cause; nay, had yielded his life, had received a mortal wound, and now came to die before your eyes, and declared with his last breath that the tidings which he told were true, and that the only recompense which he desired for all that he had done, all that he had resigned, all that he had suffered in your behalf, was that you might not forfeit your inheritance, but believe his words, and act upon them, and so come into possession;—then, I think, all incredulity must be conquered, and the soberest judgment be convinced, and the discreetest prudence be governed by such testimony.

So then it is with him who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. HE has said, "In my Father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you in them; and I will come, and take you to myself." "Where I am, there shall my servant be;" and where I am, "is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore." "For 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."

This the Christian can believe: believe! he cannot doubt it, knowing how the record has been sealed. And therefore he argues with himself, What is the world, and what are the things which are in the world, that I should live for them? They pass away: "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Such are the MOTIVES which incline those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God, to overcome the world. But motives alone are not sufficient. If it were enough that reason be engaged on the side of heaven, or that prudence taught us to seek first the kingdom of God, all would be alike seeking it. But, as was shown before, reason will not subdue natural corruption: and even where "the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak." Who that has examined his own heart and tried his ways, can hesitate to subscribe to the confession; "I know that in me, i. e. 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. For the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do.”¹

Multitudes stop here: convinced, but not converted. The way is wrong; but we have entered upon it: we cannot submit to the labour and self-denial which a change requires; and we must pursue our course to the end.

But others, led by the Spirit, proceed further; do not stop in idle acquiescence, and timidly consent to their own destruction: but continue to inquire, in the apostle’s words, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”² He shall deliver me from the law of sin. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus shall make me free from the law of sin and death.”³ He shall deliver me from the power of this world. He bids me be of good cheer: for he has overcome the world for me, and he will overcome the world in me. He shall deliver me from the malice of Satan. For, “for this was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” And “greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world.”

Such is the covenant of the Gospel, such the promise of Christ Jesus: such the purpose for which he came, and lived, and died, and rose again, that he might enable all who trust themselves to him, to overcome the enemies of their salvation, and to inherit the everlasting kingdom. “To as many as receive him, to them gives he power to become the sons of God: even to them that believe in his name.”

¹ Rom. vii. 18, &c.

² Ib. vii. 24.

³ Ib. viii. 2.

Hear his assurance to the apostle, when grieving over his infirmities or his corruptions, and praying that he might be relieved from them: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."⁴ And hear this same believer attesting the faithfulness of his Redeemer, and recording his experience: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."⁵ All things, not (in this case) miracles; except as far as overcoming the world is a miracle: for of that he is speaking. "I know how to be abased; and I know how to abound." I can be patient in tribulation, and moderate in prosperity. "I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." I can be content in the straits of poverty, and temperate in the lap of plenty. "I can do all these things, through Christ which strengtheneth me."

This confidence gives a new impulse to the Christian. He is not alone. He has help at hand. He has help above; and he has help within. While he looks around, and perceives the difficulties which lie before him, still he sees the "Captain of his salvation," who has conquered the enemy himself, and now leads him on, and encourages him to victory. When he looks into his heart, and is conscious of the evil which abides there, still he trusts the promise, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." "A new heart I will give you, and a right spirit I will put within you."

And these are not vain words: they are realised by experience. He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is able to overcome the world. He is able

⁴ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

⁵ Phil. iv. 12, 13.

to set bounds to his desires : to let his moderation be known : to restrain earthly affections, and regulate earthly cares : to " keep under his body, and bring it into subjection," instead of being governed by it ; in short, he is able to use the world, as not abusing it, and so to pass through things temporal as not to forfeit things eternal. Everything has its right place with him, without confusion or inconsistency ; pleasures, duties, business, all have their turn, all contribute towards the one great object, the working out his salvation. Duties, even if attended with mortification and self-denial, are cheerfully paid to him who has given more than either we desire or deserve : business is the work which he has appointed us to do ; and pleasures are not the object, the purpose of life, in which case they destroy it, but its merciful refreshment ; all assisting towards the end for which he lives, that he may glorify his heavenly Father, and " adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour."

Such is the case with those *who believe*, and act on the belief, *that Jesus is the Son of God*. Whether we consider their present condition, or their future prospects, they alone are blessed. They have resigned much which (we do not deny it) has charms for the natural heart. But, at the same time, they have delivered themselves from the heavy burthen and uneasy yoke which this world lays upon all who follow it : and are able to look down, as from an eminence of purer air, upon those cares, and distresses, and perplexities, which occupy

the plain below. They realise the promise of the Redeemer, "If ye continue in my word, ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

But even if it were otherwise; if what must be abandoned were far more valuable than it is; and if to relinquish it were far more painful; still the contest must be resolved on, the sacrifice risked, and the victory achieved. As faith which is in Christ Jesus is the only power which can gain that victory and overcome the world, so to have gained the victory and overcome the world is the very test by which faith that is in Christ Jesus must be tried. It is the mark by which his disciples are described and known; and they who exhibit it are "the children of the kingdom," where there shall be no more contest, because there shall be no more sin. For the Lord who giveth us the victory hath said, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne."⁶

⁶ Rev. iii. 21.

LECTURE LXXVI.

TESTIMONY TO THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL.

1 JOHN v. 6—10.

6. *This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.*

St. John had affirmed that faith in Jesus Christ enables a believer to overcome the world. He now states the grounds on which that efficacy rests. It was the purpose of his ministry, the intent of his death, to bestow such power. *This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ : not by water only, but by water and blood.*

He came *by water*. He was himself baptized ; he commanded that all should be baptized, in water, the means of purity, and therefore the emblem of holiness. The world is a defiled and a defiling place. Baptism implies a cleansing from that defilement.

But he came, *not by water only, but by water and blood*. There issued from him not a cleansing only, but an atoning stream. His blood makes

propitiation for the soul which his Spirit purifies. And, therefore, when he died upon the cross, and the soldiers pierced his side, there flowed out blood and water. It was a proof that his death was real. And it was also a sign of what his death should effect, and is therefore specially related and solemnly attested. (John xix. 35.) “He that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.” So here again the same apostle, whilst he testifies the fact, brings also his witness to the fact, saying, *It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is true.*

And thus it is that God, in offering his salvation to man, has provided a testimony to his word as sure as it is important.

7. *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.*¹

8. *And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.*

*The Father bore record to the truth, when a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son: hear him.”*²

The Word bore record to the gracious message,

¹ This verse is wanting in many ancient manuscripts; and its genuineness was held doubtful even in the time of Jerome. It cannot, therefore, add much to Matt. xxviii. 19, towards proving the doctrine of the Trinity in argument or controversy. But the sense is more complete if the sentence is retained.

² Matt. xvii. 5.

when he said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me."³

The Holy Ghost bore record, descending in a visible form upon the head of Jesus, when he was baptized with water; and upon the apostles at the day of Pentecost, when they were baptized with fire.⁴ So that *there are three that bear record in heaven*; if out of the mouth of three witnesses the truth may be established. And yet these *three are one*. The truth has both the exactness of one testimony, and the certainty of more than one.

And as there are three witnesses in heaven, so *there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood*. The heavenly witnesses are unseen. They were seen once: seen by the apostles at Jordan and on Mount Tabor.⁵ But they are now seen no longer. The record borne on earth is such as we can always perceive and judge of. *The Spirit bears witness*, when it enlightens, comforts, purifies the heart of the believer. *The water bears witness*, when the command of Christ is obeyed, and the disciple is baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And *the blood bears record*, when Christians meet together and commemorate the ransom paid by blood for the remission of sins.

Such is the ample testimony which God has furnished to the fact which of all things men most need to be assured of, the redemption that is in

³ John xiv. 6.

⁴ Matt. iii. 16. Acts ii. 3.

⁵ Matt. iii. 16; xvii. 1—7.

Christ Jesus. If we credit anything on the testimony by which it is certified; if in ordinary life we are accustomed to act on the belief of what is recorded and reported to us; then are we bound to receive and act upon the testimony which God hath given to his Son.

9. *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.*

10. *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.*

The thought is shocking, to treat God as if he could be false to his word, or to treat the word of God as if it could speak untruly. Yet this is done, when the record which he hath given of his Son is not received. But when it is received, there comes with it a witness clearer and surer than can be given by any outward testimony. *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.* He has a conviction stronger than can be produced by testimony, or wrought by argument: that conviction which was expressed by the inhabitants of Sychar, (John iv. 42,) when they said to their countrywoman, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." His words came to their hearts, with a force which convinced them of his truth. This was to have *the witness in themselves.* And it is the nature of the word of God to produce this intimate conviction. Something within the

heart responds to the truths revealed there, and assures us that they are of God. So we may suppose a person coming from a distant land, and speaking to us of one whom we have known or loved, as if he was also his own dear friend. He confirms his words, by stating circumstances known to that person, and known to ourselves : but which could only have been known to another, if that distant friend had communicated them. We can no longer doubt. He is what he professes to be. And such is the nature of *the witness* which the believer *has in himself*. The words of Scripture, the truths it reveals, the promises it contains, so suit his heart, and are so congenial to his feelings, that he is sure they must come from God : must come from Him who knows the heart, and has access to it. The Scriptures tell him of his secret thoughts. tell him of his wants, and their relief : of his fears, and their remedy. He needs no farther proof of their truth than the answer of his own heart supplies. They speak the language which is understood by him, and must come from the country, the stamp of which they profess to bear.

But *he that believeth on the Son of God hath another witness in himself*. He feels a power within him striving against the sin of his nature. He feels a power enabling him to resist, to conquer it : to do that of which St. John had before been speaking : to overcome the world. This, he knows, cannot be his own power : cannot come from anything in himself. It is not nature to resist nature.

And, therefore, in proportion as he is able to mortify the flesh with the corrupt affections: to subdue pride and self-conceit: to practise humility and meekness: to despise worldly things, and fix the heart on things above: to bring his thoughts to agreement with the principles of the Gospel, and his habits to the obedience which God requires;—so far as he has done this, he *hath the witness in himself*, because he has proof of a power “working in him both to will and to do,”⁶ what of his own accord he would not will, and of his own nature he could not do.

Happy are they who possess this witness. Let them cherish it, as that which is of all testimonies the surest. We assent to what is told us, we believe what we have heard; but there is a certainty about those things which we have felt within, and of which we have an inward consciousness, which seals the outward testimony, and enables us to say, “We know that the record is true.”

LECTURE LXXVII.

ETERNAL LIFE GIVEN IN JESUS CHRIST.

1 JOHN v. 11, 12.

11. *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son.*

12. *He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*

⁶ Phil. ii. 13.

The testimony, or truth, which each believer has in himself, as the apostle had just now said, is to this purpose, that *God hath given to us eternal life ; and this life is in his Son*. Such is *the record* : the thing recorded : that to which Scripture bears witness. Many truths are revealed in the Bible, great and important truths ; but this is *the record*, compared with which all others sink into insignificance. It deserves, therefore, to be attentively considered.

And what must first strike us in these words, is the way in which God has given to us eternal life. Not as the use of reason is granted, as the power of motion is granted, to the whole race alike. It is not given as a sure and universal possession, to be enjoyed by every man without an effort of his own : not like an estate which descends of course from a predecessor to his heir. But God has offered to us eternal life, through certain means. *He that hath the Son hath life*. He has made it dependent on certain circumstances. *He that hath not the Son of God hath not life*. He has declared to us, who have it, and who have it not. He has told us where it is to be found, and how it is to be secured. He has given it, as health was given to Naaman the Syrian, when he came to the prophet Elisha to be recovered of his leprosy.¹ That health which the prophet gave to him was in the river of Israel. "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thou shalt be clean." So has *God given to us eternal life ; and that life is in his Son*. It was the same with the Israelites in the wilderness, when they were

¹ 2 Kings v.

dying through the bite of venomous serpents, and it pleased God to supply a remedy.² He did not restore them to immediate health: he did not speak the word, and they were healed; but he commanded Moses to raise on high the figure of a serpent, and whosoever looked on it should live. So is it in regard to life eternal: God gives it through a certain mode of communication: *this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*

Plainly, therefore, the first consideration, the most needful inquiry, must be, What is it to have the Son? The Son of God *might be* possessed in a manner which John had himself once known and experienced, but which is not intended here. The apostle does not speak of the bodily presence of the Son. He does not mean that security which he and his brother apostles once had, when, tossed and endangered by a storm, they received the Lord on board their vessel, and the wind and sea were lulled.³ He could not be alluding to this kind of security: for long before St. John wrote these words, the Lord had ascended up to heaven, and was absent from this world in body. But as the apostles received him into their ship, and joyfully received him, because they knew that with him there was safety; so must those, who seek through him eternal life, receive him into their hearts, that they may dwell with him, and he with them. As his words are, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man will open the door, I will come in unto him, and sup with him, and he with me."⁴

² Numb. xxi. 6—9.

³ John vi. 21.

⁴ Rev. iii. 20.

Whosoever then opens the door of his heart, and admits the Son, and retains him there, he *hath the Son*, and through the Son *hath life eternal*. So the Ethiopian had the Son ; of whom we read in the book of Acts, that Philip, explaining to him the prophecy of Isaiah, “preached unto him Jesus.”⁵ The Lord, no doubt, opened his heart, that he received the things spoken of Philip: saw that all which Isaiah had foretold was completed in Christ Jesus. And he desired to be baptized in his name. “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.” This was to have the Son. So likewise the people of Antioch.⁶ Paul and Barnabas proclaimed to them that “the Lord had set him to be a light unto the Gentiles, that he should be salvation to the ends of the earth. And when they heard that, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord ; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” From that time they *had the Son*, and in him *eternal life*.

And we are here shown what put them in possession. On one part is the offer, *He that hath the Son hath life*. And now the Ethiopian, and the Gentiles of Antioch are in possession of the gift, and “go on their way rejoicing.” The intermediate means, through which they have gotten possession, is their faith ; their conviction that eternal life is bound up in Christ Jesus, and their willing desire to receive it at his hands. To the dying Israelites in the wilderness, the means through which they

⁵ Acts viii. 30—40.

⁶ Acts xiii. 47, 48.

received their cure was their sight; every one that was bitten, "when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." To the Christian, the medium through which he receives his blessing, the blessing of pardon and peace, is his faith; not his outward sight, but his inward faith; he represents to himself his own helpless condition, and God's gracious promise: and he says in his heart, Lord, I perceive that there is "no other name under heaven through which I may receive health and salvation, but only the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." In that name I seek the salvation which thou hast promised to them that believe. "I desire to be found", when thou comest to judgment, "not having mine own righteousness,"⁷ or any other ground of confidence, but a trust in him "who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification." I desire to be found as one who has taken the Lord Jesus Christ for "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Such, in effect, is the process through which the believer obtains possession of the Son. And it is useful to examine ourselves from time to time, and retrace the steps by which we have been led to the ground on which we have taken our stand, and are resting for salvation.

Another important reflection is suggested by this same sentence of St. John.

We perceive from it that mankind have not eternal life in themselves. They must go out of themselves for it: they cannot claim it as a right, or look

⁷ Phil. iii. 9.

to it as a natural consequence of their present being. *God has given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son.*

How, indeed, *could* we have it in ourselves? How is it to be obtained? We may suppose two ways: the way of innocence, or the way of desert: of innocence, by our having done nothing to offend God: or of desert, by our having so served him, as to be entitled to enter into his glory.

Can we then claim it in the first of these ways, as due to innocence? I feel sure that any who compare their thoughts, their words, their works, with what they ought to have been, and must be, if we are to assert our innocence in the sight of God, will join in the language of this same epistle, and allow that, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "Let every mouth be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God."

Then if we cannot be entitled to eternal life by innocence, are we entitled to it by meritorious desert, and faithfulness of service? Who will affirm, Lord, I have loved thee with all my heart, and done all things to thy glory: and now I look to eternal life as my reward? Who will adopt the words in his own case, which He spoke who alone could use them of all that ever bore the form of man: "I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do: and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self."⁸ Who will not rather own his neglect of the things which he ought to have done in God's service, and the im-

⁸ John xvii. 4.

perfection of the few duties which he has done? And yet if we could truly affirm that there had been no imperfection, and no deficiency, remember the Lord's language to his apostles; "Ye, when ye have done all, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do."

But conscience must acknowledge, not only of the worst but of the best; not only of the oldest, but of the youngest among us; that so far from earning or meriting eternal life, if God were severe to mark what is done amiss, if a balance were to be drawn between duties performed and transgressions committed; the truth would be that they had forfeited it—*forfeited it a thousand times over*, if it were to be looked for as the price of service, and reward of obedience: and their prayer, their only prayer, must be, "Enter not into judgment with thy servants, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."

God saw that it was so: and for this state he has provided. In his mercy he has offered as a gift what, except as a gift, we never could obtain. *God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* "The wages of sin is death:" and "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." "But the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."⁹

One important consideration yet remains. *He that hath the Son hath life.* And how is the awful question to be determined, whether a man has, or has not, the Son of God?

⁹ Rom. vi. 23.

This question is not left to man's imagination, to the mind, even the sincere mind, alone : any more than it is left to the mind, and the imagination, to say whether a man have soundness of health or no. Whether he has health, will be manifest by signs which cannot be misunderstood : and it will be just as plain, whether a man have the Son of God. If he has, he will have the Spirit of the Son : for we are expressly told, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And if he has the Spirit of Christ, he will be bearing "the fruits of the Spirit." And these cannot be mistaken ; for they are not the natural fruits of the human heart, and only grow there when Christ is engrafted on it : "which are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance."

These are signs, by which the all-important fact may be discovered, whether we *have the Son of God*. Together with the state of mind which belongs to one who has come to him for righteousness which he has not in himself, there will also be a way of life originating in that state of mind. And if such are our habits of thinking and of living, these thoughts and this practice are the sign and proof that *the record* which God has declared to the world, has not been proclaimed to us in vain.

LECTURE LXXVIII.

ON THE PROMISES GRANTED TO PRAYER.

1 JOHN v. 13—17.

13. *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God ; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

14. *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us :*

15. *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

A very unlimited promise was given by our Lord to his apostles, (Matt. xviii. 19,) "I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."

To those who were governed by the immediate direction of the Spirit, and who could not agree to ask anything inconsistent with the will of God, this promise might be granted.

St. John, writing later, and not to apostles but to bodies of Christians, writes that which is conformable to the experience of all ages. *If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.* He is

speaking of spiritual mercies, and he is exhorting to confidence in expecting them. *If we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask*—if we have a merciful assurance that the ears of the Lord are open to the prayers of his people, which assurance we have—then we may indulge on our parts a certain confidence that he will grant the petitions we desire.

He now applies this to a case of the greatest interest, the case of a sinning brother.

16. *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that ye shall pray for it.*

17. *All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.*

A christian brother, one with whom we have walked in the house of God as a friend, may be led astray by the malice of Satan, and fall into the ways of sin. The first and latest prayer would be, that he might turn from his wickedness and live. And there is every encouragement to pray for such mercy: to pray for that grace which may affect and convert his heart. *This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.*

Can it then be otherwise than *according to his will*, can it be contrary to his will, to grant this prayer, and to *give life to them that sin*? We read here that it may. *There is a sin unto death.*¹ *I do not say that he shall pray for it.*

¹ Rather, *there is sin*: not *a* sin. Not a particular sin, but a sinful state. There is no article in the original.

There is sin which God does not pardon in this world, or in that which is to come. There is sin from which there is no escape, no repentance, no change: because there is no such gift of the Spirit as leads to such a change.

What then can this sin be, of which the condemnation is so sure and so awful?

It cannot be any of those particular sins which are most clearly forbidden of God, and most evidently heinous in the judgment of men. These, indeed, are dreadful evils, and “on account of them the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.” But they are not inevitably sins *unto death*. The wrath of God on account of them may be turned aside.

Murder, for instance, is especially marked by God’s abhorrence, who has said, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.”² Yet murder cannot be the sin here meant. Many are recorded in Scripture who had committed murder, yet were forgiven. David caused Uriah’s death, in a way as aggravated as can be found in the annals of human crime. And yet David had the assurance of the prophet, “The Lord hath put away thy sin.”³ The persecution even unto death of the people of God, because they are his people, is a grievous crime. It is to persecute him whom they serve: it is to grieve him, who is afflicted in the affliction of his faithful servants. Precious in the sight of God is the death of his saints. Yet is not this sin unto death. Saul was guilty of this offence: no man could be more guilty: yet he became “a chosen vessel unto God:”⁴ was received into his favour,

² Gen. ix. 6.

³ Sam. xii. 13.

⁴ Acts ix. 15.

and there was "laid up for him a crown of life." The sins of the flesh "war against the soul:" defile the temple which should be sacred to the glory of God. Yet from these there is repentance. Scripture tells us of many who, like the Corinthians whom Paul addressed in his epistle, had been guilty of these things; but, like the same Corinthians, had been "washed, had been sanctified, had been justified:"⁵ had forsaken their evil ways, and returned unto the Lord, and had been abundantly pardoned. These are among the worst sins into which our nature can fall, or Satan betray the soul: and yet these are not *sins unto death*. There may be recovery from them. Experience with regard to these confirms the merciful declaration of our Lord, (Matt. xii. 31,) "All manner of sin shall be forgiven unto men." *All unrighteousness is sin. But there is a sin not unto death.* "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways."⁶

Still we know by sad observation, that though there is no sin which the mercy of God does not pardon, and the blood of Christ blot out; still there is a state of sin from which men do not rise, and repent, and turn, and which therefore is *sin unto death*. Their hearts are hardened; and the words of condemnation, and the invitations of mercy, have no more effect upon them than upon stone. Their consciences are seared; and the fresh sins which they are daily committing, make no impression on their hearts. Peter seems to have feared lest this

⁵ 1 Cor. vi. 11.

⁶ Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

might be the case with Simon the magician of Samaria. He does not say to him, as he had said to the Jewish assembly, "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out:"⁷ but he addresses him with awful doubtfulness, "Pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."⁸ The great body of the inhabitants of Jerusalem had reached this state. The Lord frequently applies to them the words of the prophet, "Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes: lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."⁹ And he knew that there was no hope left, when beholding the city, "he wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things belonging to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes."¹

It might be more manifest, in those early times, than it can be made to us, what is that state of sin which is *unto death*. This may be, perhaps, the reason why the apostle limits his precept, when he bids the Christians pray for the life of a brother who sins. If they knew that the sin was unto death, they could not pray "in faith," and therefore they could not pray effectually. Yet he speaks cautiously, and, like St. Paul on another occasion, not as "by command."² *I do not say that he shall pray for it.* Yet he does not condemn the prayer which he could not venture to enjoin.

To ourselves there can be no exception to the

⁷ Acts iii. 19. ⁸ Ib. viii. 18—22. ⁹ Isa. vi. 10; Matt. xiii. 15.

¹ Luke xix. 42.

² 2 Cor. viii. 8.

rule, *If a man see his brother sin, he shall ask.* We can never be assured that a sin is *unto death*. Whoever has read the history of Christians, or has had opportunity of observing the characters of men, has seen or known of changes great as that of Saul, and of repentance sincere and lasting as that of David. Therefore our duty is to “pray without ceasing,” while we despair of nothing: and to “pray without wavering,” while we leave the event in the hands of God. *We know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask; and that if we ask anything according to his will, it shall be granted us. There is a sin unto death.* But we can never know a sinner of whom we have more reason to despair than of those concerning whom our great Example prayed, saying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”³

LECTURE LXXIX.

ON THE WATCHFULNESS REQUIRED OF THE CHRISTIAN.

1 JOHN v. 18—21.

18. *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.*

St. John had been speaking of sin: of sin which

³ Luke xxiii. 34.

may be repented of and recovered from : and of sin which shows that the offender has fallen from grace. This leads him to repeat what he had said, and often said, before. We have no proof of an interest in Christ, except that of overcoming sin. "For this was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Such was the purpose of his coming, and such must be its effect. *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not : but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.*

Keepeth himself! A man's own care is poor guardianship, and a man's own strength is feeble protection. Neither does the apostle mean to leave us to ourselves. "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." But the Lord will not keep that city for which the watchman is not vigilant. And therefore the children of God *keep themselves*; are afraid of venturing where the children of this world rush without alarm or fear. They will not trust themselves in the way of danger. They will not indulge in pursuits which minister to pride and vanity : they refuse to enter into temptation : and, instead of yielding to appetite and inclination, they "keep under the body, and bring it into subjection."

Daniel and his three young countrymen (Dan. i. 3—16) gave an example of the self-restraint and self-denial here intended, when they refused to live after the manner of the servants of the king of Babylon ; when "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank." And God

approved of this determination, and gave him favour with Melzar, the king's chamberlain, and "he took away the portion of their meat and the wine that they should drink, and gave them pulse." Thus they were preserved from danger, the danger of a licentious court; and "God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom, so that none were found like them." They knew that "we have an adversary, the devil," always on the watch, waiting to devour. And when he finds one of God's servants unmindful of his weakness, regardless of the dangers by which he is beset, and daring to engage among scenes of wrath, strife, emulations, rivalry, and vanity; he finds him as a sheep which has wandered from the fold, out of the reach of the shepherd's voice! Such an one cannot say with David, "I have kept myself from the path of the destroyer."¹ Such an one cannot, without presumption, expect that He whose counsels he has neglected, will preserve him from the snares of *that wicked one*, and "keep him from falling."²

Yet is there good reason why God's children should *keep themselves*. They are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people."³ There is a difference, a distinction, between them and others. The Lord gave himself for them, that he might purify them unto himself as "a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

19. *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.*

¹ Ps. xvii. 4.

² Jude 23.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 9.

20. *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.*

Such is the assurance of the sincere Christian. *He knows that the Son of God is come*: and offers “to deliver him from this present evil world,” and to “give him an inheritance among the saints in light.” He knows that the Spirit which leads him to accept this offer, and to “receive the Son,” is not his own; it is given him of God. The light would shine on him in vain, unless God opened his eyes to discern *Him that is true*. “For all men have not faith.” Some “love darkness rather than light.” And when there is a contrary purpose, it is God that *gives us an understanding*, and disposes us to take refuge in his Son Jesus Christ, and separate ourselves from the ways and from the doom—first from the ways, and hereafter from the doom—of a *world that lieth in wickedness*. This refuge is secure, this deliverance is complete. *For this is the true God, and eternal life*. He who has wrought out salvation for us, is one on whom we may depend. He is “Immanuel, God with us.” He “was God; was in the beginning with God.” “He and his Father are one.” And therefore to believe in him, to have committed ourselves to him, *is eternal life*. It is the record to which all Scripture bears witness. “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”

The conclusion is,

21. *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*

How quick is the change, in fickle inconsistent man, from the highest to the lowest things, from the worthiest objects to the most unworthy! We rise, by the power of divine grace, towards heaven and its glories. And immediately, like one who has soared on borrowed wings, we are liable to sink and grovel in the dust. So that there is nothing unnatural in the apostle's warning, notwithstanding the connexion in which it comes. *This, whom you trust in and adore, is the true God. Little children, keep yourselves from idols.** Called to the noblest service, keep yourselves from the meanest slavery. Called to the sublimest faith, keep yourselves from the most wretched superstition. Keep yourselves from that false worship which you see around you, and out of which many of you have been taken. And keep yourselves also from those idols which are no less dangerous than idols of wood or stone: those objects which the world sets up before us, and which are too apt to usurp the love and the service due to God. For to love reputation, or fortune, or pleasure, or anything which this world can offer instead of God, is as much *idolatry* as the worship of a graven image.

* Φυλαξάτε εαυτους. Guard yourselves.

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN.

A. D. 91.

LECTURE LXXX.

AN EXHORTATION TO STEDFASTNESS OF
FAITH AND PRACTICE.

2 JOHN 1—8.

1. *The elder unto the elect lady and her children,¹ whom I love in the truth ; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth ;*

2. *For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.*

3. *Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.*

This short and familiar letter is an example of the spirit which St. John had been inculcating in his longer and more studied epistle. It is full of the sweetness and gentleness which belong to christian faith. He calls himself, as Peter had

¹ Nothing is known, or need be known, concerning the person to whom this letter is addressed, except what may be collected from the letter itself.

done,² an elder: he takes the modest term which belongs to the teachers of the church in common, though he was not an elder only, but an apostle, a ruler of elders. But he thus reminds *the elect lady*, the christian matron to whom he wrote, that he had grown old in the faith, and did not in his advancing age repent of the course which his youth had chosen. And now he writes to her as one following the like course, and whom on that account he *loved in the truth*. And not he only: *all they that had known the truth*, felt an interest in this godly matron. She loved what they loved: and for that reason their hearts were drawn towards her. Nothing so closely unites one heart to another as the same objects of affection. This bond of union has even a divine sanction. For the Lord declared to his apostles, (John xvi. 26,) “I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.” They were dear to the Father, because his beloved Son was dear to them, and they had joined themselves to him. And in the same spirit John here declares, that *all who had known the truth* united with him in praying, that *grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ*, might be with this matron and her children.

4. *I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.*

5. *And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote*

² I. v. 1.

a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

St. Paul had said to the Philippians, "To write the same things to you, to me is not grievous, but for you it is safe."³ And so St. John seems to feel, that to repeat the same precepts was not burthen-
some to himself; he loved the precept too well to be wearied with it; and it was safe for those whom he addressed. For constantly, whilst they remained in the world, they would be liable to temptation, and in danger of straying from the commandments given to them. In particular he enforces LOVE, as *the commandment which they had from the beginning*: that "new commandment" which was to be the especial badge, the distinguishing mark of his disciples.⁴ And as the commandment itself was new, so likewise was the motive which sanctioned it. "If ye love me, keep my commandments."⁵ So the Lord had said: and so after him, his apostle now repeats the truth:—

6. *And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.*

7. *For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.*

8. *Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.*

In proportion to the richness of the spoil, will be the cupidity of the spoiler. Christian faith had sepa-

³ Phil. iii. 1.

⁴ John xiii. 34.

⁵ Ib. xiv. 15.

rated this family from the dominion of Satan ; but he would always be endeavouring to regain them. What the Lord said to his apostles would equally apply to all his followers: "Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat."⁶ And *the deceivers*, against whom St. John warns this lady, were doing this work of Satan: they were his instruments, harassing the Christians with doubts and subtleties. They subverted the truth, denying *that Jesus Christ was come in the flesh*. It was impossible, they said, that human flesh should be the abode of the Godhead. Jesus, they alleged, was a man, like other men: the Spirit of God descended upon him: was not born with him, did not constitute a part of himself: did not live with his life, and remain with him while he yielded his life upon the cross. Thus they overturned the main pillar of the Gospel. For if Christ had not come in the flesh, he had not suffered in the flesh: and if he had not suffered, there had been no ransom paid, no propitiation secured. Then indeed would our faith be vain, and the apostles' preaching vain: men would be "yet in their sins,"⁷ for those sins have received no atonement. Therefore *is this a deceiver and an antichrist*; one of the agents of Satan, striving to ensnare the sheep, and separate it from the fold.

The apostle was a faithful shepherd, who "cared for the sheep." He was ever watchful lest one of the flock should be snatched from his hands. He was "jealous with a godly jealousy," lest he should *lose the things which he had wrought*, miss the recompense of his labours for which he was looking.

⁶ Luke xxii. 31.

⁷ 1 Cor. xv. 17.

The workman *loses what he has wrought*, when his work is spoiled. If the vessel in the hands of the potter is marred, his labour has been in vain.⁸ If it does not become “a vessel to honour, and fit for the master’s use,”⁹ his hopes are frustrated, and his pains wasted. So if *the deceiver and the antichrist* should succeed in perverting one of the disciples over whom the apostle had rejoiced in hope, he would not *receive a full reward*: a jewel would be taken from his crown of glory. For St. Paul says concerning the Thessalonian converts, (1 Thess. ii. 19,) “What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.” But if they, concerning whom he had spoken thus triumphantly, should turn aside from the faith, they would be his glory and joy no longer: the signs of his zealous labour, the fruits of his painful teaching, would be wrested from him.

Therefore St. John lifts up a warning voice against such deceivers. *Look to yourselves*. “Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit.”¹ Maintain the simple truth. The Word, the Son of God, “was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” and “gave his life a ransom for many.” “Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God. And every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God.”² “Let this word dwell in you:” for it is the word of true wisdom: the wisdom, not of man, but of God: the doctrine, not of earth, but of heaven.

⁸ Ezek. xviii. 4.

⁹ 2 Tim. iii. 21.

¹ Col. ii. 8.

² 1 John iv. 2, 3.

From the belief of this truth salvation comes: and upon the maintenance of this truth, salvation depends. This is the truth: and this truth is life eternal.

LECTURE LXXXI.

A WARNING AGAINST ENCOURAGING THE
TEACHERS OF FALSE DOCTRINE.

2 JOHN 9—13.

9. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

St. John here continues his warning against those deceivers who were disturbing the churches, and spoiling with false philosophy the simple truths of the Gospel. He declares that whoever turns aside from the original doctrine of Christ, deprives himself of the only means of communion with God.

These teachers pretended to know more of God than the Scripture has revealed. They entered upon secret things, above the reach of man's faculties; and pretended that the Godhead could not be clothed in matter, or "made flesh." So that, *denying that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh* as man, they professed to assert the honour and dignity of God: to magnify and exalt the divine nature. To

these he answers, We have but one way of knowing God, through Christ the Mediator between God and man. "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."¹ Therefore *whoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.* Let him speak or boast of God as he will, he *hath not God*; he hath not the knowledge or the favour of God; whilst *he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.* He has believed the message which the Father sent; has obeyed his command, and hearkened to his beloved Son. He has seen in him the "brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." He has perceived in his doctrine that which agrees with the divine character; he has seen how righteousness and peace, justice and mercy, have been made to meet together. He has acknowledged the excellence of his precepts, as enabling him to recover what Adam lost, to restore man, as far as he can be restored, to the height from which he had fallen. This his faith is pleasing to the Father. It is his will, "the work of God," the work which he would have done, "that we believe on him whom he hath sent."² And thus performing his will, he receives the promise, (John xiv. 23,) "If any man love me, he will hear my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Thus he *hath both the Father and the Son.* "The Father himself loveth him, because he has loved the Son, and believed that he came forth from God."³

There may be much talking and vain boasting,

¹ Matt. xi. 27.

² John vi. 29.

³ Ib. xvi. 26.

but there is no real knowledge of God except through the doctrine of Christ; no real union with him, except through the atonement of the cross. We perceive by daily proofs, that God does reveal himself to man in this way, and in no other way. We see the simple peasant, through the teaching of the Gospel, arrive at a just understanding of the "High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity." And we see the proud philosopher, who disdains to draw from that fountain, ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth. So that "he that hath the Son hath life," because he has God: and "he that hath not the Son hath not life," because he has not the knowledge of God.

St. John fortifies the mind of the Christian lady to whom he was writing by this plain assurance. He guards her against the errors which were gone out into the world, and he warns her against the sin of contributing to disseminate them.

10. *If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:*

11. *For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*

When christian teachers went from place to place, they were received by those who valued them for the truth's sake, and who were both able and willing to entertain them. They "received a prophet, because he was a prophet:"⁴ and so "used hospitality one towards another."

⁴ Matt. x. 41.

But to receive a false prophet, was to be *partaker of his evil deeds*; it was to give him countenance, and to supply him with the means of propagating his errors. It was to put weapons into the hands of one who was fighting against God. Charity towards those who are perverting and endangering men's souls is no part of christian love. Such may be regarded with pity; but they must not be assisted or encouraged. St. John was the apostle of love: but he could not extend his love to the "deceiver and the antichrist." He loved men too well to consort with the enemies of men. He loved God too well, to associate himself with the perverters of God's truth. History reports concerning him,⁵ that he once entered into a public bath, and found that Cerinthus was also there, a chief promoter of these heresies. Let us flee, he said to his companion, lest the bath should fall whilst Cerinthus, the enemy of truth, is there. This was no proof that he did not exercise that universal charity which his writings so earnestly recommend. It was no proof that he did not himself partake of the spirit which he required in others. But it was a proof that he was a true lover of mankind, and could not bear that they should be wantonly deceived. It was a proof that his love towards his God and Saviour was a warm and cordial love, and therefore a love which was jealous of his Saviour's glory. He would not *bid God speed* to one who was doing the work of Satan.

The epistle concludes with a hope that he might be permitted to confirm in person and by conversa-

⁵ This is related by Irenæus.

tion, what he could not so easily express by letter.

12. *Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.*

13. *The children of thy elect sister⁶ greet thee. Amen.*

⁶ Another unknown disciple, from whose house, probably, St. John was writing.

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN.

A. D. 91.

LECTURE LXXXII.

GAIUS IS COMMENDED FOR HIS CHRISTIAN
LIFE AND PRACTICE.

3 JOHN 1—8.

1. *The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.*

2. *Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.*

Gaius, like the christian lady to whom the preceding epistle was written by St. John, was one in whom he took a lively interest: whom *he loved in the truth*. He writes to confirm him in the way that he had chosen: to encourage him, that “with full purpose of heart he should cleave unto the Lord.” In this respect he already enjoyed much comfort. Good reports had reached him concerning Gaius. In bodily health he was weak: in spi-

ritual health he was strong. Like St. Paul, if his outward man decayed, his “inward strength was renewed day by day.”¹ And though bodily health is a very precious gift, and may be justly desired and prayed for, as fitting the possessor for the more active service of God: still the greatest blessing is granted, the object of real anxiety removed, if that can be said which is here said of Gaius, that *his soul prospereth*.

3. *For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.*

4. *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*

The lover of this world *has no greater joy* than to see the wealth which he has himself amassed, likely to increase under the management of his children. The mother's *joy* is more just and pure, when she sees her infant flourishing under her care, and so repaying her anxiety and trouble. The apostle had a feeling of this kind; but it looked to a higher object. *I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.* It would have been small gratification to him to see his children in the faith increasing in goods, or walking in the ways which led to earthly greatness: for he knew that these things are “not of the Father, but of the world:” often lead a man away from God, and not towards him. He knew that health and strength may be granted for a while, but that, “as the flower of the grass, it passeth away.” His real joy was to see his children

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 16.

walking in the truth: living in the faith and fear of God: fulfilling his will, and looking to his reward.

To bring men to such a walk, was the truth revealed. "What is truth?"² said Pilate:—not in earnest—for he had neither desire nor expectation to hear it. His question, What is truth? implied his belief that there was nothing certain, or deserving to be called true. But we know the truth, for we "are in him that is true:" and believe, that "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Gaius had so received the truth; and thus receiving it, had entered on the path which leads to everlasting glory. But there are many bye-paths and dangerous ways: many deceivers in the world, and many temptations to follow them. Therefore John *had no greater joy than to hear that his children were walking in the truth*: that neither turning aside to the right hand nor to the left, they were maintaining an onward course, and "by patient continuance in well doing, seeking for glory, and honour, and immortality."

John had a proof of this in the life and habits of Gaius. He seems to have been a man of substance; and to have employed that substance in the service of the truth which he believed, by a readiness to "use hospitality," and "to entertain strangers."³

5. *Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;*

6. *Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:*

² John xviii. 38.

³ 1 Peter iv. 9; Heb. xiii. 2.

7. *Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.*

8. *We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.*

As Paul travelled towards Rome, he "found brethren at Puteoli, and was desired to stay with them seven days."⁴ This must have been to him a great refreshment both of mind and body. Then when the brethren at Rome heard of his approach, they came to meet him and his company, and *brought them forward on their journey.*⁵ In his epistles he frequently mentions persons from whom he expected or received the like assistance. He speaks of Onesiphorus as having often refreshed him;⁶ as having sought him out very diligently and found him; as having ministered to him in many things at Ephesus. And it is singular, that whilst he wrote his epistle to the Romans, he was dwelling in the house of one of the same name and character as this friend of St. John: and says to them, "Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you."⁷ Gaius, whose hospitality I am now receiving, and who is ready to show that hospitality *to the brethren, and to strangers, who have borne witness of his charity before the church.*

We know not whether this were the same Gaius: for the name was common. But there was a manifest reason why such hospitality should be exercised. They who showed it, were *fellow-helpers to the truth*; enabling the preacher of the Gospel to *go forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles*: supporting him, till

⁴ Acts xxviii. 14. ⁵ Ib. 15. See also Acts xv. 3; xxi. 5.

⁶ 2 Tim. i. 15.

⁷ Rom. xvi. 23.

the disciples valued the teacher sufficiently to support him themselves. As one who assisted a false teacher, and received him into his house, became a "partaker of his *evil* deeds;" so one who lodged a brother and a faithful teacher, and *brought him forward on his journey*, took a share in his *good* deeds, and should also enjoy a share in his reward. Therefore St. John encourages Gaius in his pious practice, and says, *Thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers*. He rejoiced in it, as St. Paul rejoiced when he heard a like testimony of the Philippian Christians, because it gave him a proof of their faith by giving him an evidence of their love.⁸

It is part of God's mercy that he allows his people, though not personally teachers of the truth, to share in establishing the truth by assisting or maintaining those who are so engaged. Thus the Gospel becomes, as it were, self-sown. The word takes root, and springs up, producing "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." That corn is again shed upon the ground, and a fresh produce is seen to grow; and in proportion as one harvest is rich and plentiful, other harvests will succeed. That faith may justly be distrusted, which does not spread and diffuse itself; which is not active in cultivating fresh fields, and sending forth new labourers, and so extending the kingdom of God.

⁸ Phil. iv. 10 and 14.

LECTURE LXXXIII.

DIOTREPES, A DISTURBER OF THE CHURCH,
IS CENSURED.

3 JOHN 9—14.

9. *I wrote unto the church: but Diotrepes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not.*

10. *Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.*

Love of *pre-eminence*, desire of holding the first place, is common to man. It is a part of that nature which must undergo a change. And there is a first place in spiritual concerns as well as secular. Our Lord foresaw this, and warned his apostles, (Luke xxii. 26,) "He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve." "Neither be ye called masters: for one is your master, even Christ."¹ To which St. Paul has added: "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory: but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves."²

Diotrepes was one of those who had not learnt

¹ Matt. xxiii. 10.

² Phil. ii. 3.

this lesson. He probably had a party of his own in the church to which Gaius belonged, and he did not *receive* the apostle as his superior. St. John had *written to the church*, conveying his injunction that they should *bring forward on their journey* some whom he recommended to their attention, who were going forth on a mission to the Gentiles. Diotrephes took offence at this: it interfered with his authority, or his interest; and he had used to influence in opposition to the apostle: *neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.*

A private injury must be overlooked and forgiven. Charity, in the case of private wrongs, “hopeth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things.” But opposition to the apostle, resistance offered to his authority, was not a private but a public injury. The welfare of the church required submission and subordination. So that, gentle and loving as he was by nature, St. John doth not hesitate to say, when duty compelled: *Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words.* Like St. Paul to the Corinthian church: “I write to them that heretofore have sinned; and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare.”³

A word of general instruction follows.

11. *Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.*

³ 2 Cor. xiii. 2.

“No man hath *seen God* at any time.” But “faith is the evidence of things not seen.” And through faith men come to such a knowledge of God as enables them to live as if they had seen him. Thus Paul says of Moses, that “he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as *seeing him* who is invisible.”⁴ It is a test of the reality of faith, that it brings God before us, and places us in his presence. Joseph, when he was tempted, had a sense of God’s nearness to him. “How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”⁵ Job, in his humiliation, says, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.” David, when he was persecuted, had a like knowledge of God: who, though he is above, far out of our sight, is yet nigh unto all them that call upon him. “I have set God always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.”⁶

Now Diotrephes, if he meant to obtain pre-eminence among Christians, must profess to have this acquaintance with God. He could have no claim to pre-eminence, except what was derived from his superior faith and piety. St. John teaches them to judge concerning this by a test which could not be mistaken. *He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.* He that doeth evil may boast of his knowledge of God, of his communion with God: but all such boasting is vain. “Whosoever abideth in him,” whosoever hath that union with him which faith maintains, “sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.”⁷

⁴ Heb. xi. 27.

⁵ Gen. xxxix. 9.

⁶ Psa. xvi. 8.

⁷ John iii. 6.

The sin of Diotrephes was pride, self-esteem, presumption. No sin more clearly proves ignorance of God. The first effect of a knowledge of God is to make us humble; to abase us in our own eyes. And if Diotrephes had possessed any portion of that knowledge, instead of opposing the recommendation of St. John, or making a party against his friends, his thoughts must have been of this kind:—The apostle, who “was the disciple whom Jesus loved;” who had been of his company from the beginning, and “seen his glory,” and heard his “gracious words,” and received an especial unction from his Spirit:—what am I that I can withstand him, or set up in opposition to him my own judgment, my own friends, my own authority?

“Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” Diotrephes was thus known unfavourably. On the other hand, St. John writes concerning another member of Gaius’s church in strong terms of commendation. Perhaps he was of the opposite party to Diotrephes, and required the support of the apostle’s good opinion.

12. *Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.*

13. *I have many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee:*

14. *But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.*

St. John here speaks of the Christians in a term which does not occur elsewhere. *The friends* salute thee. Greet *the friends* by name. We know that the disciples of Christ were called after him whom

they followed, called "Christians," from an early period.⁸ But they were more frequently represented by their character: described under the name of "saints," or "believers," or "brethren," or, as here, of "friends." And, whatever they are called, we thus learn what they must be. Unless they "know in whom they have believed:" unless they are "holy, as he who hath called them is holy:" unless they "love as brethren," and walk together as friends:—the name of Christian will have no value, be of no effect, except to condemn them for not being what they ought to be, and what their title implies. Without that character, there will not be that *peace* to them, which John desired for Gaius: and which does belong to all who have not merely the name but the character of Christians, and are united to one another, and to God himself, by the triple bond of faith, and holiness, and mutual love.

⁸ See Acts xi. 26.

THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JUDE.

A. D. 70.

LECTURE LXXXIV.

WARNING AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS WHO
PERVERTED THE GOSPEL.

JUDE 1—4.

1. *Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,¹ to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called :*

2. *Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.*

Called, sanctified, preserved in the faith. Such is the description of Christians to whom *mercy, peace, and love* are to belong, whether in St. Jude's time or in other times. The Son of God gave himself for us, that there might be such a people; "a peculiar people, redeemed from all iniquity."

They are, first, *called*. The voice of God speaking in the Gospel is directed towards them, and reaches them : and thus they are "made to differ"

¹ Jude is called by Matthew, x. 3, and by Mark, iii. 8, "Lebbæus, whose surname was Thaddeus." Luke, vi. 16, and Acts, i. 13, styles him "Judas the brother of James: that James, who was the "pillar of the church" at Jerusalem.

from others to whom no such call is given, or who never hear the call. The calling has its purpose. "This is the will of God, even their *sanctification*:" the renewal of the soul in holiness. Thus called, thus prepared to be a people of God, they are *preserved in Jesus Christ*: sustained by his Spirit, and so enabled to continue in his faith, and overcome the enemies of their salvation.

This, however, was not to be done for them, without pains and exertion of their own. They had a part to perform, and a duty to fulfil. The purpose of Jude's short epistle is to stir them up to this, and warn them of the danger which required their vigilance.

3. *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*

Though "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient;"² there may be a time when he must *earnestly contend for the faith*, and maintain it, as it was *once delivered to the saints*: once for all delivered; so that no man may add anything to it, or diminish aught from it. Paul gave an example of this earnestness in the case of the Galatians: contending against those who troubled them, and so perverted their minds from the truth: and not scrupling to say, "If any man preach any other Gospel to you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."³ He had done the same at Antioch, when the person to be

² 2 Tim. v. 24.

³ Gal. i. 9.

contended with was one of the chief apostles. Peter had yielded to his own natural prejudices and those of his countrymen, and withdrew himself for a while from brotherly communion with the Gentile Christians.⁴ Then, says Paul, "I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed."

In cases such as these, earnestness becomes a duty, and indifference would be want of faithfulness. No man will stand calmly by, and see the foundations of his house assailed: of that house, too, which contains within its walls all that he holds most dear. Therefore, says St. Jude, *it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you.*

4. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Such was the danger against which they are warned. Certain men had insinuated themselves into the church, who were overthrowing its first principles: perverting the grace of God into an occasion of sin: *transferring* mercy, or *turning it* aside, to a purpose widely different⁵ from the purpose for which it was designed, and so *denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.* For the Lord may be denied by evil practices as well as by evil words: and they who professing to be his disciples continue in sin, are they who of all men most injuriously *deny him.*

The grace of God in the Gospel has always been exposed to this abuse. The believer is freed from

⁴ Gal. ii. 11—14.

⁵ μεταρτιθεντες.

condemnation. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."⁶ False teachers transfer this deliverance from the bondage of the law, to deliverance from the authority of the law : and so they *turn the grace of God into licentiousness*. Whilst they are "themselves the servants of corruption, they promise liberty : and allure through the lusts of the flesh those who were clean escaped from them that live in error."⁷

Then is indeed the time *earnestly to contend for the faith* : for doctrine like this destroys the soul which the Gospel is designed to save.

Is it then to be supposed that God has neglected his church, when he allows such men to *creep into it unawares*?

No, St. Jude assures us : nothing is done without his foreknowledge and permission. These were *before of old ordained to this condemnation*. It was always foreseen that there would be false brethren as well as true : that "while men slept," an enemy should sow tares among the wheat which was growing in the field of God. And therefore as the sin of Judas was foreseen, who betrayed the Lord, and his punishment appointed, when "he went to his own place :"⁸ and as the sin of the Jewish nation was foreseen, who, when they "crucified the Prince of life," and brought upon themselves swift destruction, fulfilled "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God :"⁹ so also these perverters of the church, and seducers of the brethren, were *before of old ordained to the condemnation* which awaits that

⁶ Rom. viii. 1.

⁷ 2 Pet. ii. 16, 17.

⁸ Acts i. 25.

⁹ Acts ii. 23 ; 1 Pet. ii. 8.

most heinous of offences, the abuse of the grace of God.

The Christians therefore, though they might be distressed, need not be disheartened. No strange or unexpected thing had happened, if there were such seducers. The evil was a foreknown evil, and the remedy prescribed. They must *earnestly contend for the faith delivered to the saints*, and “give place, no, not for an hour,” to those who would introduce error.

“It must needs be that offences come.” The church has in all ages been tried by false teachers *creeping in unawares*, as well as by open adversaries and avowed despisers. “There must needs be heresies among you,” says St. Paul, “that they which are approved may be made manifest.”¹ “Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal: The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.”² Whilst he has the comfort of knowing that they that are in Christ Jesus “have passed from death unto life,³ let him never forget that they that are “in Christ Jesus walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”⁴ For “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 19.

² 2 Tim. ii. 19.

³ John v. 24 ; 1 John iii. 14.

⁴ Rom. viii. 1 and 9.

LECTURE LXXXV.

WARNING AGAINST CORRUPT TEACHERS.

JUDE 5—10.

5. *I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them that believed not.*

6. *And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.*

7. *Even as Sodom and Gomorrhah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*

The great purpose of the coming of Christ was to make men "partakers of the divine nature," by delivering them from the corruption of the world, and the evil desires of their own hearts. This being the purpose of Christ, the purpose of Satan would be to prevent and frustrate it. A force must be put upon a corrupt being like man, if he is to be turned from sin. The heart, therefore, is always disposed to revert to its original course, like a bow which is forced out of its natural direction, and is ready to start back again. Too often it only wants an ex-

cuse, an opportunity. So that those false teachers of whom Jude complains had the hearts of their hearers on their side, when they corrupted the faith of the Lord Jesus, and *turned the grace of God into licentiousness.*

Jude resists these efforts. He reminds the disciples of the consequences of sin in former times, by which they might be sure what its consequences would always be: since the Lord changes not. He *puts them in remembrance* of what they had once known, how the Lord, having saved the Israelites out of Egypt, afterwards destroyed them in the wilderness. "Because of unbelief" they were never permitted to enjoy the rest of Canaan. The case might be just the same again. Jesus Christ had made propitiation for sin; but not for those who continue in sin. There is "no inheritance for them in the kingdom of Christ and of God." Christians had no privileges of covenant which the Israelites had not. The covenant did not save them, when they proved disobedient: neither will it save those who succeed them.

Nay, if the example of man is not sufficient, angels furnish further testimony. There were among the angels those who, like Adam, *kept not their first estate*, departed from grace given, and, like him, were expelled *from their own habitation*. These, too, when they lost their heavenly nature, lost all their heavenly privileges; instead of the favour of God, incurred his vengeance; and *are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.*

If "God spared not the angels who sinned," why

should he spare the Christian who sins? Is the nature of man superior to that of angels?

Again, *Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them*, hold up a perpetual warning, *suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*. They had not seen the things that Christians had seen. Their transgression might appear less heinous; yet they perished. Now the sin of those who were corrupting the church of Christ was of like nature. They, too, followed the devices and desires of their own hearts: they did not brook controul: they reviled those who would restrain, and by restraining save them.

8. *Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.*

9. *Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.¹*

10. *But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.*

Better natures than theirs had shown examples of meekness and moderation, and better creatures than they had refrained from *railing accusations*. But these have no sense of modesty, are restrained by no shame. They speak evil of the persons and *the things they know not*. They know nothing of the

¹ This is written in conformity with some ancient record, of which no other trace remains. Concerning the death of Moses, we read in the book of Deuteronomy, (xxxiv. 5,) "Moses died in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley of the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."

beauty of order and the benefits of government: how it is the remedial blessing of earth to amend what is wrong there; and the original happiness of heaven, to preserve what is excellent there. And not knowing this, they *despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities*. Further, they know not the real good of man: how it consists in the regulation of his passions, in the right direction of his affections. in the obedience of his thoughts and words and works to the law which God has prescribed: in his seeking happiness, where God has revealed to him that true happiness is to be found. And they know not the nature of heaven: how its distinctive character is, that therein “dwelleth righteousness:” and that “out of it shall be gathered all things that offend, and they that work iniquity.” *These things they know not*: and therefore they speak evil of them; they rail against them: they misrepresent them. As the Lord said to the Sadducees, when they thought to perplex him with a question concerning the resurrection: “Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God?”²

But the human mind is never void, and human nature never idle: if it is not filled with good, it will abound with what is bad: weeds will overrun the field where good seed is not sown: and the man who is not employed in resisting evil, will occupy himself in pursuing it. So these, while they *speak evil of things which they know not, in those things which they know naturally as brute beasts, in those they corrupt themselves*.

² Mark xii. 24.

There are things which men *know naturally*. They know what gratifies their appetites. The *brute beasts*, as Jude here reminds us, know the same. To them God has given instinct, so that they do not pursue their appetites to their own injury. To men he has given reason, that they may so use appetite as not abusing it: keep it within bounds, and know what is expedient for them. This he has done for all. But for these he had done more: he had laid his own commands upon them, to be temperate in all things: to “keep under their body, and bring it into subjection:” to “mortify the flesh with the affections and lusts:” to preserve their bodies from defilement, as “the temples of the Holy Ghost.” But in these very things *they corrupt themselves*. These things will always be the trial of the church. These things are the test by which it is seen where men’s heart is. It is the touchstone of their faith, whether they “believe unto righteousness.” And therefore in these things they corrupt themselves—they exhibit their corruption—who are such as Jude describes; they who reject authority; pervert the grace of God; and walk not after the Spirit, but after the flesh. This is the point to which all false doctrine tends: and this is the object at which all are aiming, who in manifold ways depart from “the truth delivered to the saints.” Their purpose is, to indulge in sin; and their object, to find some license for so doing.

“Therefore,” (it is the Lord’s own rule,) by their fruits ye shall know them.” Whether they are false teachers or true, ye shall know by the tendency of their doctrines. Do they indulge the flesh, or mor-

tify it? Do they incline us to follow *what men naturally know*, as the inferior animals; or to cherish that divine nature, which Christ came to restore? Grace never indulges nature. Nature never favours restraint. If the doctrine be of God, it will savour the things of God. But if it be of men, it will agree with the appetites and passions, and the fruits of the Spirit will not spring from it: there will be impurity, variance, wrath, strife, envyings, and such like, where there ought to be gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance.³ For “they that are Christ’s” indeed, “have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.” And “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.”⁴

LECTURE LXXXVI.

THE FALSE BRETHREN DESCRIBED AND CON- DEMNED.

JUDE 11—16.

11. *Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.*

The disturbers of the church, the false brethren

³ See Gal. v. 19—23.

⁴ Ib. vi. 8.

of whom Jude is complaining, had examples before them in sacred history. They had *gone in the way of Cain*: for, like him, they cherished malice and hatred in their hearts; and, like him, they offered sacrifice which was not accepted in the sight of God, because their works were evil. They *ran also after the error of Balaam*.¹ He was covetous of the reward of unrighteousness, and for the sake of gain would willingly have pronounced a curse upon the people of God. So these also have gain in view, and seek their own advantage. Their sin is like that of Corah and his company,² who resisted the servants of God, and opposed his faithful ministers. They *perished*. And these also perish and are lost in the same *gainsaying*, the same resistance to the truth. Following Corah in his sin, they will follow him likewise in his destruction.

12. *These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead,³ plucked up by the roots;*

13. *Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame: wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.*

Such characters ought no more to be found among the social feasts and religious meetings of Christians, than *spots* or blemishes on a polished surface:⁴ they *feed themselves*, they *revel without*

¹ See Numb. xxiii.

² Ib. xvi.

³ Originally, as "in Adam all died:" and again by relapse, after having seemed to recover.—Henry.

⁴ 2 Pet. ii. 13.

fear, without self-restraint: they were like *clouds*; not such clouds as fall in rain, refreshing the earth when it is weary; but *clouds without water*,⁵ obscuring the sky as they are *carried about of winds*:⁶ *trees* they are, but not of "the Lord's planting," though growing in the vineyard of the Lord: trees having no sound root, whose *fruit withereth away*. Or they may be compared to *raging waves*, covered with shame; casting forth that which disgraces them, as the sea casts forth its foam. Waves disturb the sea, which would otherwise be calm and placid. So these disturb the church of God, not suffering it to rest, tossing and harassing it with vain opinions. Again, they may be compared to *wandering stars*: not furnishing safe guidance, or leading the mariner to his haven; but, like a false light, deceiving him: and not destined to shine in the firmament of heaven, but *reserved to the blackness of darkness for ever*.

Such, in former times, were the sons of Eli.⁷ They introduced revelry and selfish gluttony into the solemn sacrifices, *feeding themselves without fear*: casting aside all reverence and decency, so that "men abhorred the offering of the Lord."

So, too, the sons of Samuel.⁸ They were judges in Beersheba, stars that should afford direction, trees that should bring forth good fruit: but they walked not in the way of their father; "thy turned aside after lucre, and perverted judgment."

Of the same class were the false prophets which arose from time to time, and deceived the people of

⁵ Prov. xxv. 14; Isa. lv. 10; Deut. xxxii. 2.

⁶ 2 Pet. ii. 17.

⁷ 1 Sam. ii. 12—17.

⁸ Ib. viii. 3.

Israel. Zedekiah, who lured Ahab to his doom, was a *wandering star*, saying to the king, "Go up against Ramoth Gilead to battle; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king."⁹ And he was as a *raging wave, foaming out his own shame*, when he went near to the true prophet Micaiah, and "smote him on the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?"¹

The Jewish history contained these facts. It was therefore no new thing, that there should be in the church of God characters which disgraced and injured it. There had always been "false prophets, coming in sheep's clothing, and inwardly ravening wolves." Their existence, and their end, had been foretold from the beginning.

14. *And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints,*

15. *To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.*

The brief history of Enoch in the book of Genesis does not speak of this prophecy.² But from what is said of him, we are quite prepared to hear that God should make use of him to declare his will; and put into his mouth a prophecy concerning the day when he will "judge the world in righteousness;" when the "Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him," to *execute judgment upon the ungodly*, and "shut them out

⁹ 1 Kings xxii. 6. ¹ Ib. xxii. 24. ² Gen. v. 21—24. _____

from the presence of the Lord." For the deeds which they have committed against the Lord's people, are committed against himself: and the hard speeches which they have spoken, are *spoken against him*. So Moses said to the Israelites, "Your murmurings are not against us, but *against the Lord.*"³ And so it was the reproof of Malachi against the sinners of his time, "Your words have been stout *against me*, saith the Lord."⁴

The whole character of these men is such as showed an unconverted state: such a state as is "appointed unto wrath," and not "to obtain salvation."

16. *These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.*

It is lamentable that the church of God should ever have contained such characters; nourishing serpents in its own bosom. But Scripture is not thereby weakened, but confirmed. For it uniformly contemplates, that where there is good seed, there will also be tares. An enemy will do this. And, accordingly, St. Paul observes, that "in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth: and some to honour, and some to dishonour."⁶

Meanwhile a warning is given, to which ye do well that ye take heed. "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God." If

³ Exod. xvi. 8.

⁴ Mal. iii. 13.

⁵ Matt. xiii. 5.

⁶ 2 Tim. ii. 20.

men are *murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts, and speaking great swelling words*, they carry with them their own condemnation. God has not sent them. Such “wisdom is not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.”⁷ For the wisdom that 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.”

LECTURE LXXXVII.

EXHORTATIONS AND COUNSELS CONCERNING CORRUPT MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH.

JUDE 17—23.

17. *But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ :*

18. *How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts.*

19. *These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.*

The apostles often suggest a consolation to Christians under their afflictions, by showing that nothing unexpected, no “strange thing, had happened

⁷ James iii. 15—17.

to them :”¹ nothing which had not been foretold. St. Jude says the same concerning these wicked perverters of the church. *The apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ* had prepared them for this. Peter had told them, in plain terms, that there should “come in the last times scoffers, walking after their own lusts.”² Such, he says, are the very persons whom he had already been condemning. *These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.* They separate themselves from others who maintain the doctrine which is according to godliness: they separate themselves from those who “work out their salvation with fear and trembling:” being themselves *sensual*, “walking after the flesh,” and *not having the Spirit*, by which they should “mortify the deeds of the body.” *Not to have the Spirit*, is to be *separated* indeed: separated not only from the community, but from the privileges of Christians: for none except those “who are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God.”³ So that it was the prayer of David—his prayer at a season when he had much cause to fear lest he should be abandoned altogether,—“Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy Spirit from me.”⁴

But though there was no reason for discouragement because of these scoffers and murmurers, there was great reason to guard against their bad example.

¹ 1 Pet. iv. 12.

² 2 Pet. iii. 3. Many of his expressions in the second chapter are so similar to those of Jude, as to make it manifest that the same objects were in the view of both apostles.

³ Rom. viii. 14.

⁴ Ps. li. 11.

20. *But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,*

21. *Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.*

Their *most holy faith* was the foundation on which they were placed. Their faith, that he whose disciples they were, came to redeem from sin, and died to atone for sin. This was their faith; and on this foundation they were to *build themselves up*. The use of a foundation is, that a structure may be raised upon it. And the structure to be raised on the christian faith is holiness: when they who believe “add to their faith, virtue:” are “holy as he who hath called them is holy;” “purify themselves, even as he is pure.” St. Paul was *building himself up*, when, forgetting those things that are behind, he reached forth unto those which were before, and pressed towards the mark for the prize of the high calling: “exercising himself, that he might always keep a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards all men.” For the Lord had said, “Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.”⁵

Thus *building up yourselves on your most holy faith, keep yourselves in the love of God.*⁶ Let

⁵ Matt. vii. 24.

⁶ *τηρησατε* Guard yourselves; keep that which must be attended to carefully, or it will not be kept.

nothing take the place of this love, or drive it from your hearts. To admit sin, would separate you from the love of God. The love of God, and the love of sin, cannot be in the heart together. The love of God must expel sin; or sin must drive away the love of God. No man can give his chief attention to two objects: and God must be loved with all the heart, if his love is to be retained in the heart at all.

To this end, both means and motives were supplied. The means, *praying in the Holy Ghost*: seeking the strength, the direction, the spiritual knowledge, the consolation, which varying trials and circumstances require. And the motive was, “the hope set before them.” *Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.* We never can look towards *eternal life*, without also looking to *the mercy of God*. We do not presume to come before him, trusting in our own righteousness; but, trusting in his mercy, we may look for eternal life;—we are bound to look for it: as he who lays the foundation looks to the purpose of his building: as he who prepares the ground, and plants, and fences, and guards, and prunes the tree, looks to the fruit which he expects to gather. Thus should the Christian look to the promises of God, whilst, “giving all diligence,” he *builds up himself on his most holy faith*.

And what shall be said of those who were forfeiting their everlasting inheritance, *the murmurers, the complainers, the sensual, and ungodly*? Were they to be given up, as if there was no hope that God might yet bring them to repentance? The apostle gives instructions concerning them.

22. *And of some have compassion, making a difference :*

23. *And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire ; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.*

Different remedies suit different cases. "God instructs us to discretion."⁷ Some must be gently treated. *Of some have compassion.* Perhaps their youth rendered them liable to temptation : perhaps their ignorance made them easy to be misled. Paul says concerning himself, "The Lord had mercy on me, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."⁸ And so he had compassion on Peter, though he had denied him thrice ; yet he sent him his especial message ;⁹ when the angels said to the women at the sepulchre, "Go your way, and tell his disciples, and Peter," not omitting him, lest he might think himself no longer meet to be called a disciple ; tell him too, "that he goeth before you into Galilee."

Thus *a difference should be made.* Some require severity. *Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.* No one, if delivered from a raging fire, would complain of the rough hand which struggled with him. The sinner is on the verge of everlasting fire ; and the terrors of the Lord must be represented to him, if haply he may thus be rescued "from the wrath to come." So Peter declares to the magician Simon, "Thou art in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity."¹ And then he adds, "Repent of this wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." And so Lot spoke plainly to his

⁷ See Isa. xxviii. 28.

⁸ 1 Tim. i. 13.

⁹ Matt. xvi. 7.

¹ Acts viii. 22, 23.

sons-in-law : “ Up, get thee out of this place ; for the Lord will destroy this city.”

Meanwhile they must take heed, whilst they dealt with sinners, not to be hurt by their contagion, and to maintain a sincere hatred of the sin, whilst they endeavoured to convert the sinner. *Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh*:² and so, whilst they desired to remedy evil in others, avoiding every appearance of evil in themselves. For they who thus *separate themselves*, being *sensual*, what are they but a warning, a beacon ? “ Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” They are examples of the corruption of that nature which is to be overcome : proofs of the enmity of Satan, who labours to destroy. They are examples of the upward course which the Christian must pursue, and cannot maintain without diligence and watchfulness : because “ strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

Still, *praying in the Holy Ghost, building up ourselves on our most holy faith, and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*, we may be received amongst those FEW.

² The idea seems to be taken from Leviticus xv. 4—17.

LECTURE LXXXVIII.

PRAISE AND GLORY ASCRIBED TO GOD.

JUDE 24, 25.

24. *Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,*

25. *To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*

St. Jude had begun his short epistle with a prayer: a prayer that mercy, and peace, and love, might be largely granted to the brethren. He concludes it with a sentence of praise to Him, to whom alone will praise be due, if any man is "saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." *To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.*¹

God does not disdain to receive this homage. We find it offered on earth by those who were best instructed in his will. "David blessed the Lord before all the congregation, and said, (1 Chron. xxix. 10,) Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our

¹ So Rom. xvi. 25. "To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever." Also, Eph. iii. 20, 21, and 1 Tim. i. 17. "Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever."

Father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine: thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all." Nay, we are told concerning heaven itself, that it too is filled with praise; that those who are before the throne "worship him that liveth for ever and ever, saying,² Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and praise; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

The apostle adds a reason why this hymn of praise should be offered with heartfelt thankfulness to the only wise God our Saviour.

He is *able to keep you from falling*. A constant sense of this is needful to every man who is working out his salvation in the world. We are liable to fall. Scripture abounds with examples from the beginning of its history to the end, proving that no one can reckon his footing so secure as to be out of the reach of danger. "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee."³ So Peter said, in perfect sincerity. "Likewise also said all the disciples." Yet within a few hours "they all forsook him and fled."⁴ While, therefore, St. Jude warns his people against the besetting evils of the time, and exhorts them to "build themselves up," and "keep themselves in the love of God," he reminds them that their security must depend upon *the only wise God our Saviour*. Like the mariner who

² Rev. iv. 10, 11.

³ Matt xxvi. 35.

⁴ Matt. xxvi. 56.

hoists his sails, and sets his helm in the right direction, but commits his vessel to the wind, which alone can bring him to the haven where he would be; so the Christian "keeps himself" against the assaults of the wicked one; avoids whatever may threaten injury to the soul, follows whatever may promise benefit: consults the law and the testimony, "prays in the Holy Ghost," meditates on the eternity before him. These are the means which he is instructed to employ. But still, it is not merely the saying of his lips, but the feeling of his heart, "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." There must be a power beyond his own exercised upon him, which alone can *keep him from falling*. It is his comfort that he knows this. If it is, in one sense, humbling, it is in another sense encouraging. If it lowers him in his own conceit, he may rejoice that he is thus "made low:"⁵ for "pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."⁶ And it cheers the humble and meek, that weak as they are in themselves, they may be strong in the power of God: may be "made more than conquerors" through him who is able to perform unto the end that good work which he has begun in them.⁷

The end is yet to come. We ascribe praise to him who is able to keep us from falling, and to *present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy*.

To present us *faultless*: i. e. without blame, and free from condemnation: secure against the charge

⁵ See James i. 10.

⁶ Prov. xvi. 18.

⁷ 2 Cor. xii. 10. Rom. viii. 37. Philip. i. 6.

of Satan, "the accuser of the brethren,"⁸ because delivered from his power through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. "It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?"⁹ In no other way will the Christian be presented faultless. He could not presume to appear before God, trusting in his own righteousness. He knows that it cannot be with him, as it was with his Saviour, when Pilate brought Jesus forth, and presented him to the people, saying, "I find no fault in him."¹ This can be said of no man who ever brought a sinful nature into a corrupt world. "If thou, Lord, wert to mark what is done amiss, who could abide it?"

In the case of the Christian, it is not that the all-seeing, all-knowing eye of God perceives no fault in him, but that he imputes no fault to him. He sees no fault, which has not been blotted out by the blood of Christ, and therefore his "iniquities are forgiven, and his sins are covered;"² and he is able to stand before the judgment seat of God, *before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy.*

This joy is not the less, because his salvation is not his own work, but has been wrought out for him. It does not diminish the joy of one who has been preserved from shipwreck, that when his strength had failed, and he was sinking beneath the waves, a stronger hand supported him, and drew him to the shore. It does not spoil the exultation with which the mariner enters the port in safety, that a breeze which was not at his own command, and without which he could have done nothing, had brought his

⁸ Rev. xii. 10.

¹ John xviii. 38.

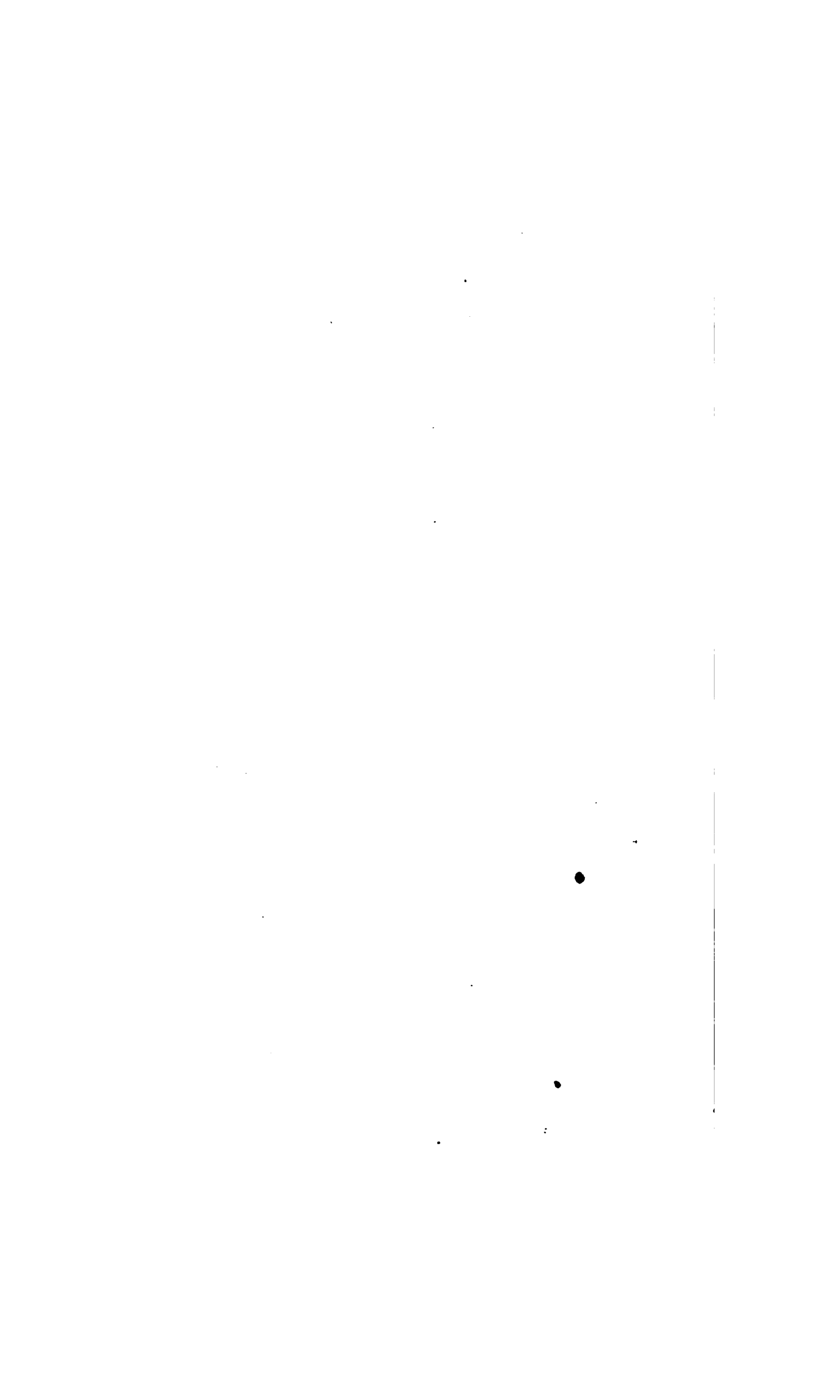
⁹ Rom. viii. 33.

² Rom. iv. 7.

voyage to its end. And such will be the Christian's feeling, increasing and not diminishing his joy, throughout time, and throughout eternity, when time shall be no more. He will join with angels, and with archangels, and with all the company of heaven, in proclaiming the same acknowledgment, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the praise." *To the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power, for ever and ever. Amen.*

THE END.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY IBOTSON AND PALMER,
SAVOY STREET.



WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

1. A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION of the GOSPELS of St. Matthew and St. Mark. Sixth Edition. 1 vol. 8vo. or 2 vols. 12mo., 9s. bds.
2. A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION of the GOSPEL according to St. Luke. Fourth Edition. 1 vol. 8vo. or 2 vols. 12mo. 9s. bds.
3. A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION of the GOSPEL according to St. John. Third Edition. 1 vol. 8vo. or 2 vols. 12mo. 9s. bds.
4. A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION of the ACTS of the Apostles, 1 vol. 8vo. or 2 vols. 12mo. 9s. bds.
5. APOSTOLICAL PREACHING CONSIDERED, in an Examination of St. Paul's Epistles; also FOUR SERMONS on Subjects relating to the Christian Ministry, and preached on different occasions. Seventh Edition. 8vo. 10s. 6d. bds.
6. SERMONS on the PRINCIPAL FESTIVALS of the CHRISTIAN CHURCH; together with Three Sermons on Good Friday. Fifth Edition. 8vo. 10s. 6d. bds. or 12mo. 6s. bds.
7. The EVIDENCE of CHRISTIANITY, derived from its NATURE and RECEPTION. Fifth Edition. 8vo. 10s. 6d. bds. or 12mo. 6s. bds.
8. A SERIES of SERMONS on the CHRISTIAN FAITH and CHARACTER. Eighth Edition. 8vo. 10s. 6d. bds. or 12mo. 6s. bds.
9. A TREATISE on the RECORDS of the CREATION, and on the Moral Attributes of the Creator. Sixth Edition. 2 vols. 8vo. 17 1s. bds.
10. FOUR SERMONS on SUBJECTS relating to the CHRISTIAN MINISTRY. Preached on different occasions. 8vo. sewed, 3s.
11. FOUR CHARGES delivered to the CLERGY of the Diocese of Chester, in the Triennial Visitations in 1829, 1832, 1835, and 1838. Price 1s. 6d. each; or the four in one vol. 8vo., cloth, price 5s.

NEW WORKS

PUBLISHED BY

J. HATCHARD AND SON,
187, PICCADILLY.

THE BOOK of ILLUSTRATIONS; or, SCRIPTURE TRUTHS, exhibited by the aid of Similes. Original and Selected. By the Rev. H. G. SALTER, A. M., Curate and Lecturer of Glastonbury. 8vo. cloth, price 10s. 6d.—“And without a parable spake he not unto them.”

SERMONS to a Country Congregation. By **AUGUSTUS WILLIAM HARE**, A.M., late Fellow of New College, and Rector of Alton Barnes. Fourth Edition. 2 vols. 12mo., cloth boards, price 16s. with a Portrait.

* * For the convenience of purchasers, either volume may be had separately, under the following titles—

1. **MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS.** 12mo. price 8s.
2. **SERMONS on the SCRIPTURES, &c.** 12mo. price 8s.

SERMONS delivered in India during the course of the Primary Visitation. By **DANIEL WILSON**, D.D., Bishop of Calcutta, and Metropolitan. 8vo., cloth, price 12s.

By the same Author.

A CHARGE delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Calcutta, at the Visitation on Friday, July 6th, 1838, with an Appendix. Price 3s. 6d.

“This Charge is excellent, and full of valuable matter.”—*Christian Observer.*

SERMONS preached in India. By **JOSIAH BATEMAN**, M.A. Vicar of Marlborough St. Mary, Wilts, and Chaplain to the Lord Bishop of Calcutta. 1 vol. 12mo., cloth, price 5s.

PLAIN SERMONS preached in a Country Parish, during the past year. By **CHARLES PEARSON**, M.A., Rector of Knebworth, and Prebendary of Sarum. 1 vol. 12mo. cloth, price 5s.

DISCOURSES on VARIOUS SUBJECTS, delivered to Congregations in the Eastern District of London. To which are added, Two SERMONS preached before the University of Oxford. By the Rev. **JOHN FERRY**, M.A., late Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, and now Rector of St. John Wapping. 1 vol. 12mo., cloth boards, price 5s.

THE LIFE and CHARACTER of HEZEKIAH considered, in Six Lectures. Delivered during Lent, 1839. By **WILLIAM NICHOLSON**, M.A., Rector of St. Maurice, Winchester. 1 vol. foolscap, cloth, boards, price 3s. 6d.

PLAIN SERMONS preached to Country Congregations. By **FRANCIS FOREMAN CLARK**, A.B., Head Master of the Grammar School, Newcastle-under-Lyne, and lately Minister of Christ Church, Coseley. 1 vol. 12mo., cloth, boards, price 6s.

SERMONS chiefly practical. By **EDWARD BATHER**, M.A. Archdeacon of Salop. 2 vols. 8vo., price 12s. each.

* * A New Volume by the same Author, is in the Press.

SEVENTEEN LECTURES on the FAMILY which JESUS LOVED; or the HISTORY of MARTHA, MARY, and ELIZABETH. By the Rev. **JAMES HALDANE STEWART**, Incumbent of St. Bride's, Liverpool. 1 vol. 12mo., cloth, price 6s.

WORKS

PUBLISHED BY

J. HATCHARD AND SON.

ADAM, REV. T.—AN EXPOSITION of the **FOUR GOSPELS**, of which the Notes on those by St. MARK, St. LUKE, and St. JOHN, have never before been published. By the late Rev. THOMAS ADAM, B.A. Rector of Winttingham; Author of "Private Thoughts on Religion," &c. With a Memoir of the Author. 2 vols. 8vo. cloth, 12s. published originally at 11. 1s.

Perhaps few were better fitted to write a practical and experimental commentary on any part of the Scriptures than this author, whose pregnant brevity of remark, and deep acquaintance with experimental religion, would preserve him from prolixity, and enable him to present the most useful view of the subject to the mind. The present posthumous work will be found characterised by all the best peculiarities of the author."—*Record*.

ALLEN, REV. I. N.—A DIARY of a **MARCH** through **SCINDE**, and **AFGHANISTAN**, with the troops under the Command of General Sir W. Nott, &c., during the Campaign of 1842. By the Rev. I. N. ALLEN, Assistant Chaplain to the Hon. E. I. Company's Bombay Establishment. Post 8vo. cloth, with several Illustrations, 12s.

"That portion of the war of which the author treats has been hitherto almost untouched."—*Asiatic Journal*.

"Everything interesting the author examined with attention; and the account he has given of the proceedings of the army, the manners, customs, and mode of warfare of the Afghans, will be read with pleasure and with profit; and we recommend Mr. Allen's book to all who feel an interest in the country."—*Times*.

ANDERSON, REV. R.—A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION of GOSPEL of ST. JOHN. By the late Rev. ROBERT ANDERSON, Perpetual Curate of Trinity Chapel, Brighton; and Chaplain to the Right Hon. Lord Teignmouth. 2 vols. 12mo. cloth. 14s.

"Written in that humble and reverential spirit, which can hardly fail to please and to improve the reader."—*British Critic*.

"A work admirably adapted for Family Reading."—*Christian Recorder*.

— **A PASTORAL ADDRESS on REGENERATION; and POETRY.** Fcap. cloth, 1s. 6d.

— **TEN DISCOURSES on the COMMUNION OFFICE of the CHURCH of ENGLAND.** With an APPENDIX. Second Edition. 1 cloth, 7s.

— **THE BOOK of COMMON PRAYER,** a Manual of Christian Fellowship. Second Edition, with a Pastoral Letter written in 1842. Fcap. cloth, 1s. 6d.

ANLEY, MISS C.—INFLUENCE. A Moral Tale for Young People. By CHARLOTTE ANLEY. Fourth Edition, fcap. cloth, 6s.

— **MIRIAM; or, the Power of Truth.** A Jewish Tale. Fifth Edition, fcap. cloth, 6s.

— **THE PRISONERS of AUSTRALIA.** A Narrative. Fcap. cloth, 3s. 6d.

— **ESSAY on the DISTINCTION between BODY, SOUL, and SPIRIT.** 32mo. cloth, 8d.

ATKINS, REV. H.—A SERIES of THEOLOGICAL LECTURES delivered in the Cathedral Church of Chichester, during Lent. In the years 1835, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41. By the late Rev. HENRY ATKINS, M.A., Rector of Wightering. 12mo. cloth, 7s.

"Very pleasing, scriptural, and profitable."—*Churchman's Monthly Register*.

"The knowledge displayed in these Lectures, the justness of reason, the excellence of the style, and its suitableness to the subjects, are a worthy of the high fame which Mr. Atkins enjoyed as a scholar and a divine."—*Gentleman's Magazine*.

BABINGTON, T.—A PRACTICAL VIEW of CHRISTIAN EDUCATION in its EARLY STAGES. By THOMAS BABINGTON. Ninth Edition. fcap. cloth, 5s.

BATEMAN, REV. J.—WHY do you BELIEVE the BIBLE to be the WORD of GOD? By JOSHUA BATEMAN, M.A., Vicar of Huddersfield. Second Edition. 12mo. cloth, 4s.

— **SERMONS PREACHED in INDIA.** 12mo. cloth, 5s.

J
TR
Rev
pric
S
WII
Bar
Por
e,
und
1
2
S
mar
poli

cut
3s.

Vit
Ca

the
Pr

Co
Se
P,
St

ed
so
pr

B
N
1s

A

BATHER, ARCHDEACON.—SERMONS, CHIEFLY PRACTICAL. By EDWARD BATHER, M.A., Archdeacon of Salop. 3 vols. 8vo., boards, each 12s.

BAXTER, REV. J. A.—THE CHURCH HISTORY of ENGLAND. By the Rev. JOHN A. BAXTER, M.A., Perpetual Curate of Christ Church, Coesley, Staffordshire. Dedicated by permission to the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Lichfield. 2 vols. post 8vo. cloth, 16s.

BEST, HON. & REV. S.—PAROCHIAL SERMONS. By the Hon. and Rev. SAMUEL BEST, A.M., Rector of Abbots Ann, Hants. 12mo. boards, 3s. 6d.

— PAROCHIAL MINISTRATIONS. 12mo. cloth, 3s. 6d.

BEVAN, REV. D. B.—FOOD for BABES ; or, the First Sermons that very Little Children are able to Understand. By the Rev. D. BARCLAY BEVAN, M.A., Rector of Burton Latimer. Second Edition, revised and corrected. 18mo. cloth, 3s.

BIBLE STORIES, selected from the Old and New Testament, familiarised for the Use of Children; in Portions. By the Author of "Questions on the Epistles," &c. Third Edition. 3 vols. 18mo. half-bound. each 2s. 6d.

BIDDULPH, REV. T.—THE YOUNG CHURCHMAN ARMED. A Catechism for Junior Members of the Church of England. By the late Rev. THEOPHILUS BIDDULPH, A.M. Minister of St. Matthew's, Bristol. 18mo. cloth, 1s.

BIDDULPH, REV. T. T.—PRACTICAL ESSAYS on the MORNING and EVENING SERVICES, and on the Collects in the Liturgy of the Church of England. By the late Rev. THOMAS T. BIDDULPH, M.A. Minister of St. James's, Bristol. Third Edition. 3 vols. 8vo. boards, 1l. 7s.

BIRD, REV. C. S.—THE PARABLE of the SOWER. Four Sermons preached before the University of Cambridge. in the Month of May, 1845. By the Rev. CHARLES SMITH BIRD, M.A., F.L.S., Prebendary of Lincoln, and late Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. Fcap. cloth, 3s. 6d.

"This is a valuable exposition of one of our richest parables, and takes so wide a range in its discussions of great principles, viewed in their practical and experimental bearings, that we can most cordially recommend it for general circulation."—*Churchman's Monthly Review*.

BISSLAND, REV. T.—SERMONS. Preached in St. Paul's Chapel, Winchmore Hill. By the late Rev. THOMAS BISSLAND, A.M., of Balliol College, Oxon, Rector of Hartley Maudytt, Hants, and Chaplain to the Right Hon. Lord Bexley. 8vo. boards, 10s. 6d.

— THE PREACHING of the CROSS the effectual Means for the Conversion of the Sinner, and the Stability of the Church. 12mo. cloth, 3s. 6d.

TF
Re
pri

W:
Ba
Po

un

ms
po

cu
Se

Vi
Cl

th
Pr

Co
Sa
P.
St

ed
so
pr

B
N
it

A

BLACKLEY, REV. W.—EXPOSITORY LECTURES on the FIRST FOUR CHAPTERS of ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL. With One on Chapter v. 21—26. By the Rev. W. BLACKLEY, B.A., formerly of St. John's College, Cambridge, Author of "Brief Review of Baptismal Obligation." 12mo. cloth, 5s. 6d.

BLOMFIELD, REV. G. B.—SERMONS ADAPTED to COUNTRY CONGREGATIONS. By the Rev. GEORGE BEECHER BLOMFIELD, A.M., Rector of Stevenage, Herts, and Canon of Chester. 2 vols. 12mo. cloth, each 5s.

BLUNT, REV. H.—POSTHUMOUS SERMONS. By the late Rev. HENRY BLUNT, M.A., Rector of Streatham, Surrey. Second Edition, 3 vols. 12mo. cloth, each 6s.

— A FAMILY EXPOSITION of the PENTATEUCH. Second Edition, 3 vols. 12mo. cloth, each 6s.

— NINE LECTURES upon the HISTORY of SAINT PETER. Sixteenth Edition. 12mo. cloth, 4s. 6d.

— EIGHT LECTURES on the HISTORY of JACOB. Sixteenth Edition. 12mo. cloth, 4s. 6d.

— TWELVE LECTURES on the HISTORY of ABRAHAM. Eleventh Edition. 12mo. cloth, 5s. 6d.

— LECTURES on the HISTORY of SAINT PAUL. Tenth Edition. 2 Parts. 12mo. cloth, each 5s. 6d.

— LECTURES on the HISTORY of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. Tenth Edition. 3 Parts. 12mo. cloth, each 5s. 6d.

— DISCOURSES upon some of the DOCTRINAL ARTICLES of the CHURCH of ENGLAND. Eighth Edition. 12mo. cloth, 5s. 6d.

— SERMONS preached in TRINITY CHURCH, CHELSEA. Fifth Edition. 12mo. cloth, 6s.

— A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION of the EPISTLES to the SEVEN CHURCHES of ASIA. Third Edition. 12mo. cloth, 5s. 6d.

— LECTURES on the HISTORY of ELISHA. Fourth Edition. 12mo. cloth, 5s. 6d.

— TWO DISCOURSES upon the TRIAL of the SPIRITS. Seventh Edition. 12mo. sewed, 1s. 6d.

— TWO DISCOURSES upon the SACRAMENT of the LORD'S SUPPER. Eighth Edition. 12mo. sewed, 1s.

— A SERMON on the LORD'S DAY. Sixth Edition. 12mo. sewed, 6d.

BOSANQUET, S. R.—VESTIGES of the NATURAL HISTORY of Creation. Its Argument examined and Exposed. By S. R. BOSANQUET, Esq. Second Edition. Post 8vo. cloth, 2s. 6d.

BRADLEY, REV. C.—SERMONS, preached chiefly at the Celebration of the Lord's Supper. By the Rev. CHARLES BRADLEY, Vicar of Glasbury, Brecknockshire, and Minister of St. James's Chapel, Clapham, Surrey. Second Edition. 8vo. cloth, 10s. 6d.

— PRACTICAL SERMONS for every Sunday and Principal Holy-Day in the Year. Complete in Two Volumes. Second Edition. 8vo. cloth, 11. 1s.

N.B. The Third Volume can be had in post 8vo. price 8s. to complete the early edition.

— SERMONS preached in the Parish Church of Glasbury, Brecknockshire. Eighth Edition. 8vo. cloth, 10s. 6d.

— SERMONS preached at St. James's Chapel, Clapham, Surrey, Sixth Edition. 8vo. cloth, 10s. 6d.

— SERMONS, preached in the Parish Church of High Wycombe, Bucks. Eleventh Edition. 2 vols. 8vo. cloth, 21s.

BRENTON, SIR J.—A MEMOIR OF VICE-ADMIRAL SIR J. BRENTON, Bart. & K.C.B. chiefly drawn from Original Notes, arranged and published by the Rev. H. RAIKES, Chancellor of Chester. 8vo. cloth.

BROWNE, REV. J.—SERMONS, preached in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Cheltenham. By the Rev. JOHN BROWNE, LL.B., Curate. 8vo. boards, 12s.

BUDDICOM, REV. R. P.—THE CHRISTIAN EXODUS; or, the Deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt Practically Considered, in a series of Discourses. By the late Rev. R. P. BUDDICOM, M.A., F.A.S., Incumbent of St. George's Church, Everton, and formerly Fellow of Queen's College, Cambridge. Second Edition. 2 vols. 12mo. cloth, 14s.

BUNYAN, J.—THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS. In Two Parts. By JOHN BUNYAN. With Original Notes by the Rev. THOMAS SCOTT. Sixth Edition. 12mo. cloth, 5s.

BURTT, G.—EXEMPLA NECESSARIA; or, Elementary Latin Exercises on all the Parts of Speech, and the Substance of Syntax; containing English Words and Sentences to be turned into Latin, Latin into English, and numerous Examination Questions to be entered on with the Accidence. With an Introduction. Short Rules are also given to assist in reading Latin correctly, for the position of words in a sentence, and for construing. Intended for young persons just beginning, for those not well grounded in grammar, and those who begin late in life. By C. BURTT, Teacher of Latin, &c. Third Edition, much enlarged. 18mo. cloth, 2s. 6d.

TF
Re
pri

BUTTERTON, REV. DR.—PAROCHIAL SERMONS on VARIOUS SUBJECTS. By the Rev. GEORGE ASH BUTTERTON, D.D., Head Master of the Royal Free Grammar School of Giggleswick, Yorkshire, late Head Master of Uppingham School, and formerly Head Master of St. John's College, Cambridge. 8vo. cloth, 7s. 6d.

W:
Ba
Po
'
un
'

CALCUTTA, BISHOP OF—EXPOSITORY LECTURES on ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE to the COLOSSIANS. In which the Apostle's argument respecting the Errors on the subject of the Mediation of Christ prevailing at Colosse, is applied to the present circumstances of our Protestant Church. By The Right Reverend DANIEL WILSON, D.D., Bishop of Calcutta, and Metropolitan of India. Second Edition, Revised and Corrected. Foolscap, cloth, 6s.

me
po

"It would not be easy to say how highly we value this short and effective commentary upon an epistle, which was evidently intended to bear on those corruptions now rapidly spreading amongst us. We receive it with thankfulness."—*Churchman's Monthly Review*.

cu
3s

— **THE SUFFICIENCY of HOLY SCRIPTURE** as the RULE of FAITH; being a Sermon delivered at the Cathedral Church of St. John, Calcutta, at an Ordination holden on Sunday, May 2, 1841. Second Edition. 12mo. sewed, 9d.

Vi
Ci

— **SERMONS** delivered in India. 8vo. cloth, 12s.

th
Pi

— **THE EVIDENCES of CHRISTIANITY**, in a Course of Lectures delivered in the Parish Church of St. Mary, Islington, containing the Lectures on the Authenticity, Credibility, Divine Authority, and Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. Fourth Edition. 2 vols. 12mo. cloth, 9s.

Cl
Si
P
Si

— **THE DIVINE AUTHORITY and PERPETUAL OBLIGATION** of the LORD'S DAY asserted in Seven Sermons. Third Edition. 12mo. cloth, 3s. 6d.

ed
sc
pi

— **SERMONS** on VARIOUS SUBJECTS of CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE and PRACTICE. Sixth Edition. 8vo bds. 12s., or 12mo. 5s.

B
N
1

— **A PLAIN and AFFECTIONATE ADDRESS** to Young Persons about to be CONFIRMED. Nineteenth Edition. 12mo. sewed, 4d.

A

— **A PLAIN and AFFECTIONATE ADDRESS** to Young Persons previously to Receiving the LORD'S SUPPER. Twelfth Edition. 12mo. sewed, 4d.

CARDALL, REV. W.—SERMONS, Preached in the Parish Church of Lancaster. By the Rev. WILLIAM CARDALL, B.A. 8vo. cloth, 8s.

CHESTER, BISHOP OF—A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION of the GOSPELS of ST. MATTHEW and ST. MARK, in the form of Lectures, intended to assist the practice of domestic instruction and devotion. By JOHN BIRD SUMNER, D.D., Lord Bishop of Chester. Sixth Edition. 1 vol. 8vo., or 2 vols. 12mo., cloth, 9s.

— **A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION** of the GOSPEL of ST. LUKE, in the form of Lectures. Third Edition. 1 vol. 8vo., or 2 vols. 12mo. cloth, 9s.

— **A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION** of the GOSPEL of ST. JOHN, in the form of Lectures. Third Edition. 1 vol. 8vo., or 2 vols. 12mo., cloth, 9s.

— **A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION** of the ACTS of the APOSTLES, in the form of Lectures. 1 vol. 8vo., or 2 vols. 12mo. cloth, 9s.

— **A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION** of the EPISTLE of ST. PAUL to the ROMANS, and the FIRST EPISTLE to the CORINTHIANS, in the form of Lectures. 1 vol. 8vo., or 2 vols. 12mo., cloth, 9s.

— **A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION** of ST. PAUL'S SECOND EPISTLE to the CORINTHIANS, and the EPISTLES to the GALATIANS, EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS, and COLOSSIANS; in the form of Lectures. 1 vol. 8vo., or 2 vols. 12mo., cloth, 9s.

— **A PRACTICAL EXPOSITION** of the GENERAL EPISTLES of JAMES, PETER, JOHN, and JUDE, in the form of Lectures. 1 vol. 8vo., or 2 vols. 12mo., cloth, 9s.

— **CHRISTIAN CHARITY**; its Obligations and Objects, with reference to the present state of Society. IN A SERIES OF SERMONS. Second Edition. 8vo. cloth, 9s., or 12mo., 6s.

— **APOSTOLICAL PREACHING CONSIDERED**, in an Examination of St. Paul's Epistles. Also, Four Sermons on Subjects relating to the Christian Ministry, and preached on different occasions. Eighth Edition, enlarged, 8vo. cloth, 10s. 6d.

— **SERMONS** on the PRINCIPAL FESTIVALS of the CHRISTIAN CHURCH; to which are added, Three Sermons on Good Friday. Fifth Edition, 8vo. cloth, 10s. 6d.

CHESTER, BISHOP OF.

— **THE EVIDENCES of CHRISTIANITY**, derived from its NATURE and RECEPTION. Sixth Edition, 8vo., cloth, 10s. 6d.; or 12mo. 6s.

— **A SERIES of SERMONS on the CHRISTIAN FAITH and CHARACTER.** Eighth Edition, 8vo. cloth, 10s. 6d.; or 12mo. cloth, 6s.

— **A TREATISE on the RECORDS of the CREATION, and on the MORAL ATTRIBUTES of the CREATOR.** Fifth Edition. 2 vols. 8vo. cloth, 11. 1s.

— **SIX CHARGES delivered to the CLERGY of the Diocese of CHESTER, at the Triennial Visitations in 1829, 1833, 1838, 1841, and 1844.** 8vo. cloth, 7s.

THE CHILD'S VISION; or, the ANGEL and the OAK. By the Author of the "Priestess." Square 12mo. cloth extra 2s. 6d.

CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY; a Collection of Letters addressed to Mourners. 32mo. cloth, gilt edges, 2s. 6d.

CHRISTMAS IMPROVEMENT; or, Hunting Mrs. P. A Tale, founded on Facts. Intended as a Christmas Box for those who wish to begin the New Year without Her. Third Edition, 16mo. cloth, 2s. 6d.

CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE. By the author of "The Listener." Seventh Edition. Foolscap, cloth, 6s.

CONTENTS.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. In the Object of Life. | 4. In the Condition of Life. |
| 2. In the Rule of Life. | 5. In his Sorrows. |
| 3. In his Intercourse with the World. | 6. In his Joys. |
| | 7. In his Death. |

CHRISTIAN OBSERVER, conducted by Members of the Established Church, from 1802 to 1846; and continued monthly, 1s. 6d.

CLARK, REV. F. F.—PLAIN SERMONS to COUNTRY CONGREGATIONS. By FRANCIS FOREMAN CLARK, A.B., Head Master of the Grammar School, Newcastle-under-Lyne, and late Minister of Christ Church, Chorley. 12mo. cloth, 6s.

CLARK, MRS. T.—THE COUNTRY PARSON'S WIFE. Being intended as a Continuation of, and Companion to, "HARRIS'S COUNTRY PARSON." By Mrs. THOMAS CLARK, of East Bergholt, (late Louisa Lane.) Fcap. cloth, 2s. 6d.

TF
Re
priW:
Ba
Poun
:ma
pocu
3sVi
Cith
PiC:
Si
P
Sted
sc
piB
N
1

A

CLOSE, REV. F.—CHURCH ARCHITECTURE SCRIPTURALLY CONSIDERED, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Time. By the Rev. F. Close, A. M., Perpetual Curate of Cheltenham. 12mo. cloth, 3s. 6d.

— **FIFTY-TWO SKETCHES of SERMONS on MISCELLANEOUS SUBJECTS.** 8vo. cloth, 6s.

— **MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS.** Preached at Cheltenham. Second Edition. 2 vols. 8vo. bds. each 12s.

— **A COURSE of NINE SERMONS**, intended to illustrate some of the Leading Truths contained in the Liturgy of the Church of England. Preached in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Cheltenham, in the year 1825. Seventh Edition, 12mo. cloth, 5s.

— **THE CATHOLIC DOCTRINE OF THE SECOND ADVENT** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, considered in a course of Four Sermons, preached in the Parish Church, Cheltenham, in the season of Advent, 1845. 12mo. cloth, 2s. 6d.

COMPANION to the **BOOK of COMMON PRAYER**, of the United Church of England and Ireland.

CONTAINING,

1. Subjects of Meditation for every Sunday throughout the year.
2. Texts of Scripture to be committed to memory.
3. Reading Lessons for every Sunday morning and evening.
4. A Catechism on a new plan.

24mo. cloth, 2s.

CONFIDENCE in **GOD** the **ONLY TRUE REST** for the **SOUL**, and **REFUGE** in these **ALARMING TIMES.** Fcap. bds. 5s.

CONSISTENCY. By **CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH.** Fifth Edition. 18mo. boards, 2s. 6d.

CONVERSATION on the **ADVANCE WE HAVE MADE** in **CHRISTIAN CHARITY**; or, Why is it not Enough for a Man to be Sincere? 18mo. cloth, 1s.

COOKESLEY, REV. W. G.—SERMONS. By the Rev. **WILLIAM GIFFORD COOKESLEY, M.A.,** Assistant Master of Eton College. 2 vols. 12mo. cloth, each 5s.

"Sound and moderate in doctrine, earnest in their exhortations, and well suited for the purposes of family and domestic worship."—*Church and State Gazette.*

"These Sermons are eminently suited to the sober temper and practical objects of family worship, as they never, in developing the Gospel dispensation, forget the important place assigned in it to the faithful discharge of temporal duties."—*Britannia.*

TF
Re
pri

CRAIG, REV. E.—BRIEF HINTS to CANDIDATES for HOLY ORDERS. By the Rev. EDWARD CRAIG, Curate of Burton Latimer. Fcap. cloth, 3s.

Contents:—Choosing the Profession—Preparatory Study—Reading for Holy Orders—The Formularies—Composition—Sermon-Making—Preaching—Reading—Schools—Visiting—Dissent—Popery—Consistency, &c.

W:
Ba
Po
“
un-
:

CRUDEN, A.—A COMPLETE CONCORDANCE to the HOLY SCRIPTURES of the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT; or, A DICTIONARY AND ALPHABETICAL INDEX to the BIBLE. In Two Parts. To which is added, A CONCORDANCE to the APOCRYPHA. By ALEXANDER CRUDEN, M.A. The Ninth Edition. To which is added, a Life of the Author, by ALEXANDER CHALMERS, F.S.A. 4to. boards, 11. 1s.

ms
po

CUNNINGHAM, REV. J. W.—SERMONS. By the Rev. J. W. CUNNINGHAM, A.M., Vicar of Harrow, and late Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge. Fifth Edition. 2 vols. 8vo. bds. 11. 1s.

— **A WORLD WITHOUT SOULS.** Fourth Edition. 12mo. cloth, 5s.

— **SIX LECTURES on the BOOK of JONAH.** Fcap. bds. 3s.

cu
3s.

— **MORNING THOUGHTS, in PROSE and VERSE, on Portions of the Successive Chapters in the Gospel of St. Mark.** Third Edition. Fcap. bds. 2s. 6d.

VI
Cl

— **THE VELVET CUSHION.** Eleventh Edition. Fcap. bds. 5s.

DAILY READINGS. Passages of Scripture selected for Social Reading, with Applications. By the Author of "The Listener," "Christ our Example," &c. Second Edition. 12mo. cloth, 6s.

th
Pi

DAUTREY.—THE BIBLE in PALESTINE; or, Hints from Scripture by which to determine the localities of the Crucifixion, the Transfiguration, and other great events of our Saviour's Life. Together with Notes of a Tour through the Holy Land, during the Summer of 1843. By Mr. and Mrs. DAUTREY. 12mo. cloth, 6s.

C:
S:
P:
S:

DEALTRY, REV. DR.—SERMONS, CHIEFLY PRACTICAL, Preached in the Parish Church of Clapham, Surrey. By WILLIAM DEALTRY, D.D., F.R.S., Rector of Clapham, and Chancellor of Winchester. Second Edition, 8vo. boards, 10s. 6d.

ed
sc
Pi

DEBRETT—COMPLETE PEERAGE of the UNITED KINGDOM of GREAT BRITAIN and IRELAND. A New Edition, arranged alphabetically. Edited by WILLIAM COURTNEY, Esq. 8vo. half-bound, 11. 10s.

B
N
1:

— **BARONETAGE of ENGLAND.** Seventh Edition, with Additions. Edited by WILLIAM COURTNEY, Esq. With a New Set of Arms. 8vo. half-bound, 11. 8s.

A

DIMOCK, REV. J. F.—THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES of the CHURCH of ENGLAND, Explained, Proved, and Compared with her other Authorized Formularies, the Homilies and Liturgy, in a Plain and Popular Manner. By JAMES F. DIMOCK, M.A., Curate of Stilton, Huntingdonshire. 2 vols. 8vo. boards, 15s.

DRUMMOND, H.—SOCIAL DUTIES on CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES. By HENRY DRUMMOND. Fifth Edition. Fcap. cloth, 4s.

DRUMMOND, REV. S. R.—ELEMENTS of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION; being Sketches of Sermons preached at St. John's, Brighton. By the Rev. SPENCER RODNEY DRUMMOND, M.A., Perpetual Curate of St. John's, Chaplain to Lord Viscount Melville. Fcap. cloth, 2s. 6d.

EIGHTEEN MAXIMS of NEATNESS and ORDER. To which is prefixed an Introduction by **THESSA TIDY.**

“For want of a nail, the shoe was lost;
For want of a shoe, the horse was lost;
For want of a horse, the rider was lost,
(Being overtaken and slain by the enemy,)
And all for want of care about a horse-shoe nail.”

Poor Richard.

Twenty-fourth Edition. 18mo. sewed, 6d.

EDELMAN, REV. W.—SERMONS on the HISTORY of JOSEPH. Preached in the Parish Church of St. Mary, Wimbledon. By the Rev. W. EDELMAN, late Curate of Wimbledon. 12mo. cloth, 5s.

EDWARDS, REV. E.—TWENTY-ONE PLAIN SERMONS, DOCTRINAL and PRACTICAL. Originally preached before a Country Congregation. By the Rev. E. EDWARDS, Perpetual Curate of Marsden, in the Diocese of Ripon. 12mo. cloth, 6s.

“To Mr. Edwards's Sermons we invite the public attention: they realise our notion of practical Sermons.”—*Church of England Quarterly Review.*

ELWIN, REV. F.—A VOLUME of SERMONS. Preached at the Octagon Chapel, Bath, and printed at the request of the Congregation. By the Rev. FOUNTAIN ELWIN, Vicar of Temple, Bristol, and one of the Ministers of the Octagon. 12mo. cloth, 5s.

— **SEVEN SERMONS** on the CHARACTER of GIDEON. Preached at the Temple Church, Bristol, and at the Octagon Chapel, Bath. Second Edition, 12mo. cloth, 4s.

THE FAMILY PASTOR; or, Short Sermons for Family Reading. By a Clergyman of the Church of England. 12mo. cloth, 3s. 6d.

FINCHER, J.—THE ACHIEVEMENTS of PRAYER, Selected exclusively from the Holy Scriptures. By JOSEPH FINCHER, Esq. With a Testimony to the Work by James Montgomery, Esq. of Sheffield. Third Edition. 12mo. cloth, 6s.

— **THE INTERPOSITION** of DIVINE PROVIDENCE. Selected exclusively from the Holy Scriptures. 12mo. cloth, 6s.

FLETCHER, W. E.—THE CHILD'S GUIDE THROUGH the BIBLE; or, a Help to understand the Bible, as the Record of God's Plans for Teaching Men Religion. By W. EVANS FLETCHER, B.A. Fcap. cloth, 4s.

FORTY FAMILY SERMONS. By the Editor of the "Christian Observer." Dedicated, by permission, to the Bishops of Winchester and Chester. 8vo. cloth, 12s.

FUTURE DAYS. A Series of Letters to my Pupils. Intended as a Present for Young Ladies leaving School. 12mo. cloth, 5s.

Among the contents will be found:—Content and Occupation—Mental Cultivation—Conversation—Marriage—Wives of Celebrated Men—Training the Young—Servants—A Sketch—Liberality—The Christian's Hope—Biographical Notices.

"The tone is unexceptionable, and the morality inculcated not of too impracticable a character."—*Spectator*.

GARBETT, REV. J.—PAROCHIAL SERMONS. By the Rev. J. GARBETT, Rector of Clayton, Sussex, and Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford. 2 vols. 8vo. cloth, each, 12s.

"These volumes form an excellent addition to our stock of standard works on Christian faith and practice. For private study or household reading, they are the best that have fallen under our view."—*Britannia*.

— **CHRIST as PROPHET, PRIEST, and KING;** being a Vindication of the Church of England from Theological Novelities, in Eight Lectures, preached before the University of Oxford, at Canon Hampton's Lecture, 1842. 2 vols. 8vo. cloth, 11. 4s.

"An able, learned, and valuable publication, the fruits of many years' study and reflection."—*Christian Observer*.

"We have read these volumes with interest, and we hope with edification. We regard them as very valuable, on the grounds of their intrinsic merit."—*Churchman's Monthly Review*.

— **A REVIEW of Dr. PUSEY'S SERMON;** and the Doctrine of the Eucharist, according to the Church of England. 8vo. sewed, 6s.

GARDNER, J.—THE GREAT PHYSICIAN; or, an Attempt to trace the Connection of Diseases and Remedies with the Truths of Revelation. By JOHN GARDNER, M.D., Editor of "Liebig's Letters on Chemistry." 8vo. cloth, 10s. 6d.

"The work before us displays learning and ability."—*Morning Chronicle*.

"This work, 'The Great Physician,' is evidently the production of a clear-thinking head and a sound heart; the subject, a new and most interesting one. * * I am no critic; I only know when I myself am pleased, and I can only say, that, without giving an unqualified assent to some of the positions, the work, as a whole, has interested me much."—*Author of the Christian Gentleman's Daily Walk*.

TF
Re
priW:
Ba:
Poun:
:
:me
po.cu
3s.VI
Ctth
PiCo
St
P.
Sted
sc
piB
N
1:

A

GIBSON, E.—THE HISTORY of the DECLINE and FALL of the ROMAN EMPIRE. By EDWARD GIBSON, Esq. New Edition. 8 vols. 8vo. cloth, 3l.

THE GIPSIES. Dedicated, by permission, to James Crabb, the Gipsies' Friend. Fcap. cloth, 4s. 6d.

GOODE, REV. F.—A NEW VOLUME of SERMONS. By the late Rev. FRANCIS GOODE, Lecturer at Clapham. 8vo. cloth, 10s. 6d.

— **THE BETTER COVENANT PRACTICALLY CONSIDERED,** from Hebrews viii. 6, 10—12; with a SUPPLEMENT on Philippians ii. 12, 13. Fourth Edition. 8vo. boards, 10s. 6d.

GOODE, REV. W.—TWO TREATISES on the CHURCH. By Dr. T. JACKSON and BISHOP SANDERSON; with a Letter of Bishop Cosin, on the Orders of the Foreign Reformed Churches. Edited, with Introductory Remarks, by WILLIAM GOODE, M.A., Rector of St. Antholin. Fcap. cloth, 5s.

— **MODERN CLAIMS** to the GIFTS of the SPIRIT, Stated and Examined. With Appendix. Second Edition. 8vo. bds. 10s. 6d.

— **TRACTS** on CHURCH RATES. 8vo. bds. 7s. 6d.

— **THE CASE AS IT IS;** or, a Reply to Dr. Pusey's Letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury; including a Compendious Statement of the Doctrines and Views of the Tractators as expressed by themselves. Third Edition. 8vo. sewed, 1s.

— **ALTARS PROHIBITED** by the CHURCH of ENGLAND. 3 Parts in 1. 8vo. sewed, 2s. 6d.

— **A LETTER** to a LAY FRIEND, in Answer to Inquiries respecting the State of Things in the Church, and the Course which the Present Crisis demands from those who tender its Welfare. Second Edition, enlarged. 8vo. sewed, 1s.

— **TRACT 90 HISTORICALLY REFUTED;** or, a Reply to a Work by the Rev. F. Oakeley, entitled, "The Subject of Tract 90 Historically Examined." 8vo. sewed, 5s.

THE GOSPELS COLLATED. Presenting in one view the Concurrent Testimony of the Evangelists. By a BARRISTER of Lincoln's Inn. Royal 8vo. cloth, 1l. 1s.

"We feel it our duty to give this volume our warmest recommendation."
—*Oxford Herald.*

TF
Re
pri

THOMPSON, REV. E.—A VOLUME of SERMONS upon the FUTURE STATE of HAPPINESS. By the Rev. EDWARD THOMPSON, M.A., Minister of Charlotte Chapel, Pimlico. Dedicated, by permission, to Her Majesty the Queen Dowager. Second Edition. Post 8vo. cloth, 6s. 6d.

W:
Ba:
Po
4

— **POPULAR LECTURES upon the DIFFERENCES EXISTING BETWEEN the CHURCH of ENGLAND and the CHURCH of ROME.** Enriched with copious Notes. Post 8vo. cloth, 6s. 6d.

un:
:
s

THOMPSON, REV. F. E.—TWELVE LECTURES preached in St. George's Chapel, Old Brentford, in the Season of Lent 1844 and 1845. By the Rev. F. E. THOMPSON, B.A., of Trinity College, Cambridge, and Incumbent of Old Brentford. 12mo. cloth, 5s.

ma
po:

“These are sketches it is true, but they are sketches by the hand of a master. Mr. Thompson's style is original, and we may venture strongly to recommend this little work.”—*Church and State Gazette*.

cu
3s.

“In a theological point of view his object is very successfully accomplished by Mr. Thompson. In a literary sense the plan of the writer gives purpose, variety, and interest to his discourses. Biography and applied morality are superadded to the general matter of a Sermon. The style is agreeable—the manner rapid and impressive.”—*Spectator*.

Vi
Ct

THISTLETHWAITE, REV. W.—TWENTY-ONE SERMONS for CHARITY SCHOOLS. By the late Rev. W. THISTLETHWAITE, A.M., Incumbent of St. George's, Bolton. To which is prefixed a MEMOIR of the AUTHOR, with a Portrait. 12mo. cloth, 10s.

th:
Pi

THORNTON, H.—FEMALE CHARACTERS. By the late HENRY THORNTON, Esq., M.P. With Prayers adapted to the Lectures. Second Edition. Fcap. cloth, 3s.

Ct
St
P
St

— **ON the TEN COMMANDMENTS, with PRAYERS.** Second Edition. 12mo. cloth., 2s. 6d.

— **LECTURES upon the SERMONS on the MOUNT.** Second Edition. 12mo. cloth, 5s.

ed
so
pr

— **FAMILY PRAYERS, in a Series for a Month.** Sixteenth Edition. 12mo. cloth, 3s.

B
N
1:

TRACTS FOR DISTRIBUTION.

FEED MY LAMBS, a Lecture for Children in Words of One Syllable. By the Rev. T. G. HATCHARD. 3d. each, or 2s. 6d. per dozen.

A

GRIMSTON, HON. MISS.—ARRANGEMENT of the COMMON PRAYER BOOK and LESSONS, Dedicated, by Permission, to Her Majesty.

The peculiar advantage of this arrangement consists in having the entire Morning and Evening Service printed in a large clear type, in two portable volumes, one for the Morning and the other for the Evening.

The following are the prices :—

	£	s.	d.	
The largest size demy 12mo. Morocco elegant	-	2	0	0
Ditto plain	-	1	15	0
Ditto calf gilt leaves	-	1	10	0
The second size, royal 18mo. Morocco elegant	-	1	15	0
Ditto plain	-	1	10	0
Ditto calf gilt leaves	-	1	5	0
The smallest size, royal 32mo. Morocco elegant	-	1	4	0
Ditto plain	-	1	1	0
Ditto calf gilt leaves	-	0	16	0

GRYLLS, REV. T.—SERMONS preached in the Cathedral Church of St. Peter's, Exeter, by the late Rev. THOMAS GRYLLS, A.M., of Trinity College, Cambridge, Prebendary of Exeter, and Rector of Cardynham, Cornwall. With a Biographical Sketch of the Author, by the Rev. J. FURNETT, M.A., Vicar of St. Erth, and formerly of Clare Hall, Cambridge. 8vo. cloth, 10s. 6d.

"We have looked into this Volume with great satisfaction. The interesting biographical sketch which precedes the Sermons (twenty in number) prepared us to expect what we found, an earnest and sincere piety, and sound scriptural views, enforced and adorned by the graces of a highly cultivated mind."—*John Bull*.

HANKINSON, REV. T. E.—SERMONS. By the Rev. THOMAS EDWARDS HANKINSON, M.A., late of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and Minister of St. Matthew's Chapel, Denmark Hill. 8vo. cloth, 10s. 6d.

HARE, REV. A. W.—SERMONS to a COUNTRY CONGREGATION. By AUGUSTUS WILLIAM HARE, A.M., late Fellow of New College, and Rector of Alton Barnes. Sixth Edition. 2 vols. 12mo. cloth, 16s.

"They are, in truth, as appears to us, compositions of very rare merit, and realise a notion we have always entertained, that a sermon for our rural congregations there somewhere was, if it could be hit off, which in language should be familiar without being plain, and in matter solid without being abstruse."—*Quarterly Review*.

HASTINGS, REV. H. J.—PAROCHIAL SERMONS, from Advent to Trinity Sunday. By the Rev. HENRY JAMES HASTINGS, M.A., Rector of Areley Kings. 8vo. cloth, 12s.

—**PAROCHIAL SERMONS,** from Trinity to Advent Sunday. 8vo. cloth, 12s.

"These Sermons appear to us to be written in the spirit of a true Churchman; and we may safely assure our readers that they will find them replete with edifying matter, and well calculated to serve the purpose of a companion and guide to the services of the ecclesiastical year."—*Churchman's Monthly Review*.

TF
Re
pri

W:
Ba
Po
e
un
:
:

ms
po

cu
3s.

Vi
Ci

th
Pi

C:
S:
P
Si

ed
sc
Pi

B
N
1

A

HATHERELL, REV. J. W.—NINE SERMONS Preached at the Palace Chapel in Valetta, at Malta, in October, November, and December, 1841. To which are added **TWO THEOLOGICAL ESSAYS**, read on public occasions. By the Rev. J. W. HATHERELL, D.D., Brasenose College, Oxford, and Rector of Charmouth, Dorset. 12mo. cloth, 3s. 6d.

HENDRY, MISS E. A.—CRESSINGHAM RECTORY. Family Conversations on various Subjects. By ELIZABETH ANNE HENDRY. 12mo. cloth, 3s.

HIFFERNAN, REV. J. M.—CHARACTERS and EVENTS in SCRIPTURE HISTORY PRACTICALLY CONSIDERED. A Series of Lectures. By the Rev. JOHN M. HIFFERNAN, A.M., Curate of Fethard, in the Diocese of Cashel. 12mo. cloth, 5s.

HINTS to PROMOTE a LIFE of FAITH; or, the Ratification of the Baptismal Covenant. By a Member of the Church of England. Fcap. cloth, 4s. 6d.

"This work is intended to aid inexperienced inquirers to attain a life of faith. It is written in a truly pious, practical, and devotional spirit."—*English Review.*

HINTS on EARLY EDUCATION and NURSERY DISCIPLINE. Fifteenth Edition. 12mo. cloth, 2s. 6d.

"I think I may say that of all men we meet with, nine parts out of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education."—*Locks.*

HINTS for REFLECTION. Compiled from various Authors. Third Edition. 22mo. cloth, 2s.

HISTORY of JOB, in Language adapted to Children. By the Author of the "Peep of Day," "Line upon Line," &c. 18mo. cloth, 1s.

HITCHEN, REV. J.—TWELVE SERMONS. Preached in St. Mary's Episcopal Chapel, Glasgow, 1842. By the Rev. ISAAC HITCHEN, M.D., Assistant Minister. 8vo., cloth, 7s. 6d.

HOLLOWAY, REV. DR.—THE ANALOGY of FAITH; or, an Attempt to Show God's Methods of Grace with the Church of Christ, as set forth in the experience of David. By the Rev. THOMAS HOLLOWAY, D.D., Some time Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, and Minister of Fitzroy Chapel, Fitzroy Square. 8vo. cloth, 10s. 6d.

— **EUCARISTIA**; or, a Vindication of the Lord's Supper from the Superstition and Idolatry of Modern Innovations. Being the Substance of a Course of Sermons preached before the Congregation assembling to Worship at Fitzroy Chapel. Fcap. cloth, 2s. 6d.

HOPE, MRS.—SELF-EDUCATION and the FORMATION of CHARACTER: Addressed to the Young. By MRS. HOPE. Second Edition, Revised. 18mo. cloth, 2s. 6d.

"Parents and teachers will gain many useful hints from the perusal of this volume."—*Record*.

HOPE, DR.—MEMOIRS of the LATE JAMES HOPE, M.D., Physician to St. George's Hospital, &c. &c. By MRS. HOPE. To which are added, **REMARKS on CLASSICAL EDUCATION**. By Dr. HOPE. And **LETTERS from a SENIOR to a JUNIOR PHYSICIAN**. By Dr. BURTON. The whole edited by KLEIN GRANT, M.D., &c. &c. Third Edition. Post 8vo. cloth, 7s.

"The general, as well as the medical reader, will find this a most interesting and instructive volume."—*Gentleman's Mag.*

"A most interesting and valuable volume."—*Britannia*.

"A volume of universal interest."—*Morning Post*.

"A very interesting memoir to every class of readers."—*Christian Observer*.

HOPWOOD, REV. H.—ELISHA'S STAFF in the HAND of GEHAZI, and other Sermons. By the Rev. HENRY HOPWOOD, M.A., Queen's College, Cambridge. Late Inspector of Schools for the National Society. 12mo., cloth, 2s. 6d.

Any profits accruing from these Sermons will be devoted towards defraying the expenses of erecting an Altar-Screen and an Organ, in Christ Church, Worthing.

HOWARD, J.—MEMOIRS of JOHN HOWARD, the Christian Philanthropist: with a Detail of his extraordinary Labours; and an Account of the Prisons, Schools, Lazarettos, and Public Institutions he visited. By THOMAS TAYLOR, Esq., Author of "The Life of Cowper," &c. &c. With a Portrait. 18mo. cloth, 7s.

WILKINSON, REV. W. F.

— **THE RECTOR in SEARCH of a CURATE.** Post 8vo. cloth, 9s.

Contents:—1. The Parish—2. The Curate—3. The Temporary Curate—4. 5. The Evangelist—6. The Evangelicals—7. The Unfortunate Man—8. The Scholar—9. The Millenarian—10. The Anglo-Catholic—11. The Approved—12. The Ordination.

“A lively and entertaining book.”—*Christian Observer*.

“A work calculated to obtain a general reception in all the reading circles.”—*Herald*.

“Interesting and attractive.”—*Spectator*.

WILKS, REV. S. C.—CHRISTIAN ESSAYS. By the Rev. SAMUEL CHARLES WILKS, M.A. Second Edition, 8vo. boards, 12s.

WILLIAMS, MISS J. L.—CHILLON; or, Protestants of the Sixteenth Century. An Historical Tale. By JANE LOUISA WILLIAMS. 2 vols. 8vo. cloth, 18s.

“We think highly of this pathetic story. A true spirit of cheerful piety pervades its pages; the characters are nicely discriminated, and many of the scenes are very vividly portrayed. All who read it may derive benefit from its perusal.”—*Britannia*.

“The book before us furnishes proof of considerable ability.”—*British Quarterly Review*.

WINCHESTER, BISHOP OF.—THE MINISTERIAL CHARACTER of CHRIST PRACTICALLY CONSIDERED. By CHARLES RICHARD SUMNER, D.D., Lord Bishop of Winchester. Second Edition, enlarged. 8vo. cloth, 12s.

WOODROOFFE, MRS.—SHADES OF CHARACTER: Or, Mental and Moral Delineations; Designed to promote the formation of the Female Character on the basis of Christian principle. By ANNE WOODROOFFE. Fourth Edition. 2 vols. fcap. cloth, 12s.

— **THE HISTORY OF MICHAEL KEMP, THE HAPPY FARMER'S LAD.** A Tale of Rustic Life, illustrative of the Spiritual Blessings and Temporal Advantages of Early Piety. Sixth Edition, fcap. cloth, 4s.

— **MICHAEL THE MARRIED MAN.** A Sequel to the above. 12mo. cloth, 6s.

WORDS of WISDOM for MY CHILD, being a Text for Every Day in the Year, for the use of very Young Children. Second Edition. 22mo. cloth, 2s.

YORKE, MISS C. J.—REFLECTIONS for LEISURE HOURS on the Duties, Hopes, and Privileges of Life, &c. By CAROLINE JANE YORKE. Fcap. cloth extra, 6s.

LONDON: PRINTED BY G. J. PALMER, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

TF
Re
pri

WJ
Ba:
Po
e
un:
:
:

ma
po:

cu
3s.

VI
Cs

th
Pi

Ct
St
P
St

ec
sc
pi

B
N
1:

A





YC100874

