***~~Charles Simeon's Devotional Commentaries~~***

***~~The Book of REVELATION~~***

#2475

***~~Each Person in the Holy Trinity to Be Addressed in Prayer~~***

***~~[Revelation 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.4), [5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Revelation 1.5)~~***

John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him who is, and who was, and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.

The revelations of John are doubtless extremely difficult to be understood: but yet a particular blessing is promised to the study of them; and certainly, in proportion as they are understood, they enlarge the heart towards God, who foresees everything from the beginning, and *ordains everything for the accomplishment of his own eternal purposes*. It is not however my design, at this time, to enter into any of those events which are predicted in this book; but only to draw your attention to this introductory passage, which will be found replete with the most important instruction.

It may be viewed,

***~~I. As a benedictory salutation—~~***

It is customary with the inspired writers to begin almost all their epistles with a salutation similar to that before us. *"Grace and peace" comprehend all those blessings which a sinner needs, and which every Christian supremely desires.*These are invoked in behalf of the seven churches of the Lesser Asia; and are implored, with remarkable distinctness, from each Person in the ever-blessed Trinity.

***~~1. From God the Father—~~***

He is described in terms declarative of his essential perfections; and with a peculiarity of language which will perhaps be found in no other writer, nor in the writings of John himself, except in this place. It would seem that the Apostle had in his mind a special reference to the name of the Deity as revealed to Moses, when he was commissioned to declare to his brethren, "*I am* has sent me unto you." And intending to convey an idea of Jehovah's self-existence from eternity to eternity, and the absolute unchangeableness of his nature, he expressed himself in the most significant terms that language could afford, yes, and in terms which even violated the proprieties of language, so that he might communicate his idea in a more determined form.

To Him who is, and who was, and who is to come—even the Father, as to the fountain and source of all good, he looked in the first instance, desiring that grace and mercy might descend from him.

***~~2. From the Holy Spirit—~~***

It is not to be conceived that the Apostle would unite angels with Jehovah as a source of "grace and peace;" and address himself, as it were, in prayer to them. Nor is there, as far as we know, any more reason for his addressing "seven" of them, than seventy times seven.

It must be remembered, that *the whole book of Revelation is emblematic and figurative*; and therefore the Apostle addresses the Holy Spirit in language suited to the whole character of the book which he was about to write.

The number seven, among the Hebrews, was considered as expressing perfection: and when the Apostle uses the expression, "the seven Spirits," he is not to be understood as speaking of seven different persons, but of *the Holy Spirit, in all his diversified gifts and operations*. And he represents him as "before the throne;" because, in the economy of redemption, both he and the Lord Jesus Christ act in subordination to the Father: the Father sends the Son; and both the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit; who is therefore represented as "before the throne," ready to execute any commission that shall be assigned to him. *He, as the great Agent to convey all that the Father has ordained, and all that the Lord Jesus Christ has purchased for sinful man*; he, I say, together with the Father, is also supplicated in behalf of the seven Churches, to impart unto them the blessings which are here implored.

***~~3. From the Lord Jesus Christ—~~***

He, too, is here described by the various offices which he performs in behalf of our ruined race.

As the great PROPHET, he is "the faithful Witness," who came on purpose "that he might bear witness to the truth," and who has declared to men all that he was commissioned to reveal. He has made known the Father to us, and has plainly shown how we are to obtain acceptance with him. "Truly it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," nor is it less true, that, as he is "the way, the truth, and the life," so "no man comes unto the Father but by Him."

As our great HIGH-PRIEST, he has offered himself a sacrifice for our sins; and, having risen from the dead, he has entered into the holy of holies, there to present his blood before the throne, and there to make continual intercession for us. He rose, not as others, to die again, but to an immortal life: and in this respect he was "The first begotten from the dead," and "The first-fruits of those who slept." In this, as in everything else, "He has the pre-eminence."

As our KING, also, is he here addressed. For he is exalted above all the principalities and powers both of Heaven and earth. He is "the Prince of the kings of the earth," even "King of kings, and Lord of lords." And in all these offices he is empowered to act for us, and to give to us according to our necessities. He is indeed the living Head, "in whom is all fullness treasured up for us;" and "out of whose fullness we all receive grace upon grace."

I dwell not upon the particular description of the Sacred Three; it being my intention only to show that *we are authorized to look to our Triune God, who is ever ready to hear our supplications*, whether for ourselves or for each other, and to grant unto us all that our necessities require. "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, were we baptized;" and for "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit," we are taught to pray. If the passage before us be not so obvious in its import at the first sight, I think that, when viewed aright, it teaches us very strongly the same instructive lesson.

I proceed, therefore, to consider the words before us,

***~~II. As an instructive admonition—~~***

We see in it,

***~~1. What should be the supreme object of our desire—~~***

*"Grace and peace," as we have already observed, include all that a sinner needs, or that a saint can desire*. In truth, we do need them, no less for our present comfort than for our eternal welfare. That we have all greatly offended God by our innumerable transgressions, can admit of no doubt; and unless his "grace" and favor be extended to us, we must eternally perish. Nor can we turn to him of ourselves: we must receive from him that "grace" and strength, which alone can qualify us for that arduous task. But, until this is effected, we can have no peace, either with God or in our own conscience. God has said, that "there is no peace to the wicked: and I will venture to ask, of all who are here present, whether they know anything of solid peace in their minds, except as they have sought it in earnest prayer, through the mediation and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ? Insensibility to spiritual realities, indeed, is common enough: but even that can only be maintained in a neglect of all serious thoughts of the eternal world. At the prospect of death and judgment the stoutest stand appalled, unless they have come to God through Christ, and obtained from him that peace which Christ alone can give.

Now then, I say, Grace and peace are the blessings which we should desire infinitely beyond all earthly good. The godly should affect them as the only means of true happiness. They were necessary for all the seven Churches of Asia, and for the most advanced Christian among them.

And are they not necessary for the ungodly? They may possibly amuse themselves during this short life, though destitute of grace and peace: but what will they do in a dying hour, and when they shall be summoned to the bar of judgment? How "will they call on the rocks to fall upon them, and the hills to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb," whom they have so long neglected and despised! I would that the lovers of this present world would bethink themselves *what their present vanities will avail them in that solemn day*; and that now, while an opportunity is afforded them, they would flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on eternal life.

***~~2. Whence alone they are to be obtained—~~***

People have some general idea of the mercy of God, without ever considering in what way that mercy shall be exercised. But, indeed, my brethren, God must be approached in the way that he himself has pointed out. Did any offender, under the law, come to God without a sacrifice? So neither can you, without that great Sacrifice which has been offered for the sins of the whole world. Nor did any come but through the mediation of the priest, who was appointed to present his sacrifice to God: so neither can you come, but through the mediation and intercession of the Lord Jesus. Were washings and sprinklings appointed by the law? So must you also have the Holy Spirit poured out upon you, to sanctify you throughout.

Do not imagine that these are mere notions, which may be disregarded, without any loss to your souls. Indeed it is not so. To what purpose has God revealed these truths, if they are not to be received and acted upon by us? Know then, that if you would have "grace and peace" given unto your souls, you must come to God through Christ, and by his Spirit; (for there is no other way of "access to him;") and then will each person of the ever-blessed Trinity impart unto you these blessings, in the way that God has ordained, and in the measure that he shall see fit.

***~~Two REFLECTIONS, almost of necessity, obtrude themselves upon us, as arising from this subject—~~***

***~~1. How ignorant are the generality of the Christian world!~~***

It is surprising how little the peculiar doctrines of our holy religion are considered. The generality of professing Christians have scarcely any other views of God than such as a Mohammedan entertains. Many actually discard all idea of a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead. And where the doctrine of the Trinity is professedly received, it is, for the most part, regarded as a merely speculative and unimportant tenet. But, indeed, it is a practical and most important doctrine: *practical*, because the whole life of faith is affected by it; and *important*, because it is only by maintaining a due regard to it, in our approaches to God, that we can obtain from God any spiritual benefit.

And here I will ask of those who have not realized these truths in their minds, What have been your prayers? and, What blessings have they brought down into your souls? It is indeed true, that a poor contrite sinner shall be heard, even though he may not yet have been fully instructed in this mystery: but let those answer, who, while they have professed to acknowledge this great mystery, have been regardless of it in their approaches to God: What have been your prayers? Have they not been cold, formal, and altogether destitute of any divine energy? And what have you gained by them? Are you not at this hour as far from God as ever, and as destitute of grace and peace as ever?

Look at the great mass of Christians, even of those who would be thought religious: How many are there who, in the course of ten or twenty years, have never advanced a single step in vital godliness! I will not say, indeed, that this is owing to their neglect of this particular doctrine; because, doubtless, there are many other causes to which it may be traced, and the same lack of spirituality may be found among some of its warmest advocates: but this I will say, that, among those who disregard this mystery, the lack of spirituality is universal: and it is no wonder that they never make any advance in the divine life; because, if they go not to God in the way in which alone he will be found, they can never hope to receive from him the blessings which they stand in need of.

On the other hand, only contemplate the Deity as he is here set forth: *think of each Person in the ever-blessed Trinity sustaining distinct offices for you; and possessing each, as it were, a treasure of blessings to pour out on you*, the very instant you go to God in his appointed way. What a pledge does this give you of an attention to your supplications, and of success in your endeavors! To all I say, Study with all diligence the character of Jehovah; and improve, for your benefit, the offices which, in your behalf, he is ready to discharge.

***~~2. How base and groveling is the taste of the professing Christian world!~~***

What do men affect, either for themselves or for those connected with them? They desire nothing beyond this present world. Whatever will advance the welfare of the body, they are anxious to obtain; but for spiritual blessings they have no wish. Indeed, the very idea of "grace and peace," as derived from the different Persons of the Godhead, and as enjoyed in a man's own soul—they regard, for the most part, as no better than a fanatical conceit.

But such was not David's sentiment. When the inquiry occurred to him, "Who will show us any good?" his answer was, "Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us." Yes, to that he looked for happiness, more than to the greatest possible increase of corn or wine or oil. *Worldly prosperity was to him no better than dross or dung, in comparison of the welfare of his soul.*O! let it be so with you, my brethren. Let the continual language of your soul be, "Whom have I in Heaven but you, O Lord? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with you."

Remember, I entreat you, what is the distinctive character of a true Christian: it is not by any peculiar *notions*that he is to be known; no, nor by any outward acts. No, it is by his predominant taste: he desires, above all things, an increase of grace and peace. In comparison with these, all other things are but as the small dust upon the balance. O brethren! raise your minds to these things: "set your affections on them, and not on things on the earth." Then shall these blessings abound in your souls, and earth become to you the very porch of Heaven!

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***~~The Grounds of Praise to Christ~~***

***~~[Revelation 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.5), [6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Revelation 1.6)~~***

Unto him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

WHILE men continue in a natural and unrenewed state, they feel very little gratitude for the mercies of Providence, and are altogether unmindful of the blessings of redemption. But when the grace of God has wrought effectually on their hearts, they begin to view his hand in all the comforts they enjoy, and to bless him more especially for the wonders of redeeming love. Whenever they are in a frame of mind at all suited to their character, they are ready to burst forth, like the beloved disciple, into expressions of rapture and adoration!

In the words before us we are led to consider,

***~~I. The GROUNDS of our love to Christ—~~***

Doubtless he is worthy of our love for *his own sake*, seeing that "he is fairer than ten thousand, and altogether lovely;" but he is also to be loved on account of *what he has done for us*:

***~~"He has loved us"—~~***

This he has done from all eternity: he has done it, notwithstanding there was nothing lovely in us, neither had we any love for him; yes, notwithstanding there was everything in us that was hateful, and we were full of enmity against him. Though he never manifested any love to the angels who fell, yet has he loved us: and love has been the one principle that actuated him in all that he has done for us.

***~~"He has washed us from our sins in his own blood"—~~***

Rivers of tears were insufficient to wash away one sin: nor was there any fountain in the whole creation that could cleanse a guilty soul. He therefore, rather than we should perish, provided one for us; and suffered his own sacred body to be crucified, in order that we might be washed in his precious blood. This is sufficient, as thousands have experienced, to purge from sins of deepest dye; and every believer, however aggravated his past iniquities may have been, may glory in that he has been made whiter than wool or snow.

O what love was this! If he had washed us in the blood of slain beasts, or sent an angel to die for us, it were a wonderful act of mercy; but to wash us in his own blood—O the heights and depths of this incomprehensible love!

***~~"He has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father"—~~***

Astonishing is the exultation to KINGSHIP which the believer now enjoys: even Lazarus was greater than the highest monarchs upon earth, and exercised a government to which their power could not extend. The Christian's spiritual enemies are under his control: his lusts are subjected to his dominion; and Satan himself flees from him with trepidation, as from a victorious prince.

With this dignity, he bears also that of PRIESTHOOD. Time was, when God himself would avenge the insult, if even a king had dared to invade the office of the priesthood: but now all Christ's ransomed people are admitted to it; they are anointed to it with a holy unction; they have access at all times within the veil; and they offer unto God continually the sacrifices of prayer and praise.

If, on considering these things, we feel love and gratitude rising in our hearts, let us learn from the Apostle,

***~~II. The MANNER in which we should express it—~~***

We should not rest in the gift, but raise up our minds unto the Giver—

***~~1. We should contemplate him in our MINDS—~~***

The abrupt manner in which the Apostle introduces this song of praise, and the energetic way in which he directs our eyes to Christ, sufficiently show that his mind was filled with his subject; and that he had a lively sense, not only of the benefits conferred on him, but also of the excellency of that Savior, from whom they were derived. Now thus it should be with us: "Our hearts should muse, until the fire kindles and we speak with our tongue."

Is there any other subject in the world so interesting, so noble, so profound? Is there any other being to whom we are so indebted, or in the contemplation of whose glory we can rest with such delight? Let us then keep our eyes fixed on him, until we exclaim with the prophet, "How great is his goodness! how great is his beauty!"

***~~2. We should adore him with our LIPS—~~***

Higher strains of adoration cannot be paid to God the Father, than are here offered to Jesus Christ. We therefore may worship him as the supreme God, even as all the hosts of saints and angels are doing around his throne. He has all those perfections that deserve glory, and all that power that is entitled to dominion. To him therefore let glory and dominion be ascribed. Let us never be afraid of honoring him too much; for we never more truly exalt the Father than when we honor the Son as the Father.

***~~3. We should glorify him by our LIVES—~~***

When the Apostle ascribed glory and dominion to Christ, he did not mean to except himself from the number of those who should honor his perfections, and submit to his government: but rather by the addition of "Amen," he purposely expressed his acquiescence in that which he required from others. Thus, without claiming any exemption for ourselves, we should cordially devote to him the souls which he has purchased with his blood: we should yield to his authority in all that he commands; and seek his glory in all that we perform.

***~~III. Application—~~***

***~~1. To those who are unmindful of what Christ has done for them—~~***

It scarcely seems credible that such persons should be found in a Christian land: but, alas! they abound in every place. But let them blush for their ingratitude. Let them know too, that the very blood which was shed to cleanse them from their sins, will aggravate, instead of removing, their eternal condemnation.

***~~2. To those who are doubting whether they are savingly interested in what Christ has done—~~***

We are not to ascertain our saving interest in Christ first, and then to go to him for salvation; but first to go to him for salvation, and then, from the exercises and fruits of our faith, to conclude that we do indeed belong to him. If the time that is lost in doubting and questioning, were improved in fervent applications to him for mercy, we would soon be enabled to say, "He has loved me, and given himself for me." Instead of asking, Am I washed in his blood?—Go, and wash in it, and be clean.

***~~3. To those who are glorying in Christ as their Savior—~~***

What a Heaven upon earth do you enjoy! for, what is the state, what is the employment, of those above? They are *kings*seated on their thrones: they are *priests*offering their sacrifices before the mercy-seat: they are singing, in one universal chorus" Salvation to God and to the Lamb! Such is your state, such is your employment, at this very hour.

It is not said, that you *shall*be washed, or shall be made kings and priests unto God, but that you *already*possess these inestimable privileges. Go on then, ever mindful of these mercies, and of him who procured them for you by his blood: and give him glory and dominion forever and ever, as well in the *rectitude of your lives*, as in the *devotion of your hearts*.

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***~~Christ Coming to Judgment~~***

***~~[Revelation 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.7)~~***

Behold, he comes with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

THE great subject of the book of Revelation seems to be to predict the trials and deliverances of God's Church to the end of time. To a superficial observer, it would appear strange that God should permit his enemies to triumph for so long a period, and in so awful a degree. But there is a time coming when all these inequalities in the Divine government will be rectified, and a *righteous reward*be given to those who suffered; while those who inflicted the sufferings upon them will be given a *righteous retribution*. To this period our attention is directed in the very commencement of this prophecy; that *persecutors*may know what tribulation awaits them, and the *persecuted*may be comforted in the prospect of their eternal rest.

Let us then contemplate,

***~~I. The future judgment of our Lord—~~***

***~~Behold, he is surely coming to judge the world—~~***

Our blessed Lord is "ordained by the Father to be the Judge both of the living and the dead." The time for his future advent, though not known either to men or angels, is fixed in the counsels of the Father—and at the appointed instant it shall arrive. The world will be sleeping in security and carelessness, as much as ever they were in the days of Noah—but it will not on that account be delayed: "it will come as a thief in the night, and as travail upon a woman with child."

With inconceivable glory will the Lord Jesus then appear, surrounded with myriads of the heavenly host, and "coming in the clouds of heaven"—His judgment-seat will be erected. The books wherein all the actions, words, and thoughts of men are recorded, will be opened, and all the universe be summoned to give an account of themselves to him—

***~~Then "shall every eye see him"—~~***

All who have ever lived, from the very commencement to the end of time, shall be raised from the dead, each in his own proper body. The sea as well as the land will give up the dead that are in it, and not an individual, however great or however obscure, be wanting. All will surround his throne, and behold him in full view: not as unconcerned spectators, but as *criminals*, whose cause he is about to try, and whose state he will fix in happiness or misery forever and ever.

Thus certain, and thus solemn, will be "our gathering unto Jesus at the last day." But let us more distinctly consider,

***~~II. The future judgment's aspect on the different classes of mankind—~~***

The text more especially refers to the ungodly: but, as *all*will be equally interested in that event, we shall extend our views to the world at large; and consider the aspect of our Lord's second coming,

***~~1. On the UNGODLY—~~***

"Those who pierced our Lord" in the days of his flesh, thought not that they should ever behold his face again: but every one of them shall be summoned to his presence in that day. Pilate with the chief priests, and Herod with his men of war, and all the populace who demanded his crucifixion, and the soldiers who mocked him in gorgeous apparel, and drove the crown of thorns into his temples, and those who ploughed long furrows on his back by scourging, and those who nailed him to the cross, and the soldier that pierced his sacred body after he was dead, and all who approved of those proceedings—shall in that day see him yet once more, with all the marks of their cruelty yet upon him! Yes, they shall all recognize in his glorious person the Man whom once they treated with such indignity. But how widely changed the condition both of themselves and him!

Themselves, no longer in a capacity to oppress him; and him, no longer capable of suffering from oppression!

Themselves, as malefactors and murderers; and him, as the Judge about to take cognizance of their offences!

Themselves, as children of the devil; and him, as "the Lord of glory!"

O, with what horror will they be struck! With what dread will they be overwhelmed!

But are there not many who "pierce the Lord" at this time also, and "crucify him afresh," by continuing in their sins? Yes truly, *there are many among us not a whit less criminal than his very murderers*; I should rather say, far more criminal; inasmuch as they who reject him now, sin against incomparably greater light than was enjoyed by any previous to his crucifixion.

It is this that makes the sin against the Holy Spirit so heinous, in comparison of the sins committed against the Son of man. The Holy Spirit has borne such testimony to the truth, as nothing but *willful infidelity*can resist. And they who at this day hear the Gospel preached to them, and make no account of all the wonders of love and mercy that are set before them, have a measure of guilt which will make their last state worse than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Think then, you, who, having heard the truth, reject it; and, more especially, you, who, having embraced the truth, dishonor it, or depart from it—think, I say, what will be your views and feelings, when you shall behold that Savior face to face! Will you not be ready to call upon the rocks and mountains to fall upon you, and to cover you from his wrath? Yes, indeed you will; and if even the whole earth will wail because of him, much more will you, who have received all his grace in vain.

The Apostle adds, "Even so; Amen," by which I understand him, not merely as confirming the truths which he has before asserted, but as acquiescing in them as every way worthy of their Divine Author. It is right that those who once pierced him when on earth, should wail because of him; and it is right that they also who reject him now, should feel the full weight of his displeasure. Paul himself puts that matter beyond all doubt, when he says, "If any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maranatha!"

***~~2. On the GODLY—~~***

Blessed be God, though all the unregenerate shall wail, there are some to whom the Savior's advent will be a ground of joy! We are told, that the saints "wait for his appearing," and "love it," and "look forward and haste unto it," and in the spirit of their minds are saying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" However terrible his advent will be to others—it will not be so to them; for the prospect of being called to "meet the Lord in the air," is that which Paul teaches us to regard as a source of the richest consolation, under whatever trials or losses we may be called to sustain. "Comfort one another," says he, "with these words."

But here you will naturally ask, *Whence arises this difference between the two?*Why do the one behold him with such anguish of heart, and the others with such unutterable joy? I answer, The godly have beheld him here, and "mourned before him as for an only Son." They have seen how grievously they have themselves pierced him by their iniquities; and they have bewailed their guilt and folly with the deepest contrition. They have even looked to his wounds as endured for their transgressions; and have sought for "healing to their souls by the stripes inflicted on him," and having done this by faith, they are accepted before God, and shall "be presented before him faultless with exceeding joy."

Seek then, beloved, "the Spirit of grace and of supplications," whom God has promised to pour out upon you. Then shall you have such views of the Savior as shall bring peace to your souls, and such views as will give you confidence before him at his future coming.

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***~~Being in the Spirit~~***

***~~[Revelation 1:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.10)~~***

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.

WE are told by our blessed Lord, "Not to fear those who can only kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." The truth is, that while men are wreaking their vengeance upon the body, they cannot obstruct God's communications to the soul, or destroy the happiness of those whom they desire to torment.

Paul and Silas have borne testimony to this: for, with their feet fastened in the stocks, and their backs torn with scourges, they "sang praises to God aloud at midnight."

John, too, when he was "banished to the Isle of Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ," and was there "a companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," participating, in his advanced age, the afflictions with which all the seven Churches of Asia had been visited; he, I say, received more abundant manifestations of God's love to his soul, and was honored there with revelations more full and complete, than were ever given to any other man. And we also, if suffering for the sake of Jesus Christ, may expect that, "as our afflictions abound, so also shall our consolations abound by Christ."

In confirmation of this, I will show,

***~~I. How far this experience of John may be realized by us—~~***

When it is said, that "He was in the Spirit" on the Lord's day, I conceive that we are to understand, he was in a trance or ecstacy, somewhat similar to that of the Apostle Paul, who was "caught up into the third heavens, and knew not whether he was in the body, or out of the body." Yet, as it was the Lord's day, a day kept sacred by the Christian Church, in commemoration of the resurrection of our blessed Lord, we may be sure that he was in a frame of mind becoming the Sabbath of the Lord.

Now, I readily acknowledge, that, as far as relates to anything *miraculous*, Christians of the present day have no warrant to expect any communications similar to those which were given to John; but of spiritual blessings it is the privilege of every Christian to participate; and on the Sabbath-day he ought to experience a more abundant effusion of them on his soul.

***~~1. The Lord's day is set apart for that end—~~***

It is a day on which all worldly business should be suspended, and the soul be wholly given up to divine and spiritual employments. The ceremonial part of the Sabbath may be considered as abrogated, together with the rest of the Mosaic ritual: but the moral observance of it is as much in force as ever. Even in Paradise that was enjoined, and therefore we are assured it is of perpetual obligation: and the kind of observance which it demands, is well described by the prophet: "You shall turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day; and shall call the Sabbath a delight; the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shall honor him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words."

Here we see how the Sabbath should be sanctified: everything that is earthly and carnal should be banished from our minds; and our whole conversation and employment should have a direct reference to God, and to the concerns either of our own souls, or of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world.

***~~2. Our frame of mind should be suited to it—~~***

If we regard the Lord's day as we ought, "then," as the prophet says, "shall we delight ourselves in the Lord; and he will cause us to ride upon the high places of the earth, and will feed us with the heritage of Jacob our father." Six days God has given us for earthly labor: the seventh should be wholly his; our thoughts and desires going out after him; our souls rising to him in sweet meditation, and in holy fellowship; our praises ascending from the altar of our hearts, and all our sacrifices doubled.

In a word, we should then "dwell in God, and have God dwelling in us;" so near should be our access to him, so intimate our communion with him, so entirely our souls surrendered up to him.

On every day we should be "a people near unto God;" but on the Sabbath more especially we should be able to say, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." In this sense we should "be *in*the Spirit on the Lord's day." To "be *filled*with the Spirit," is as much our privilege, as it was of the Apostles. To "*pray*in the Holy Spirit," to "*walk*in the Spirit," and "*live*in the Spirit," are not peculiar to any order of men, or any age of the Church—they are duties enjoined on all: and if we serve our God with the fidelity that befits us, these things will characterize our whole lives, while they will preeminently appear on the Sabbath-day.

That we may not think lightly of this privilege, let me proceed to state,

***~~II. The special call we have to seek it—~~***

To illustrate this, I would observe,

***~~1. Our necessities require it—~~***

By our daily interaction with the world, we are, to a certain degree, clogged and fettered, so that we cannot run our race with the steadiness that we could wish. But, on the Sabbath day all "these weights are laid aside," and our garments being girt about us, we make our way with augmented rapidity. If I may be permitted to use so familiar an expression, we are widing down, like a clock, throughout the week; and need to be wound up on the Sabbath-day, for further exertions in the service of our God. And who has ever truly sanctified his Sabbaths, without being able to attest, that they have been made effectual for this blessed end?

Like Elijah, we have a long journey before us; and we eat richly of the provision which God has made for us. But God sets a second feast before us: and we rise and eat again; and are thus strengthened for exertions which would have far surpassed our natural strength. Yes, a second ordinance has been the means of completing that, which the first had only begun. Indeed, God often so peculiarly adapts the provisions of his house to our peculiar necessities, that it seems as if the minister had been informed of our particular case, and had been addressing himself to us alone.

Here I may put it to the conscience of every individual among us, and ask him: Whether he has not actually found that he has suffered loss in his soul, when he has neglected to improve a Sabbath, and spent it in vain pursuits?

Nay, I may further ask: Whether a very great portion of the enormities committed, among those who call themselves Christians, may not, in a great measure, be traced to a neglect of the Sabbath-day? I may justly say then, that "the Sabbath was made for man," even for the supplying of our spiritual necessities; and that those necessities loudly call upon us to sanctify that day unto the Lord.

***~~2. The ordinances are unprofitable to us without it—~~***

Why is it that so many attend upon divine ordinances from year to year, and never derive any saving benefit from them? It is because they do not ever seek to be in the Spirit on the Lord's-day. When they wake in the morning, they have no distinct consciousness, that it is a day to be consecrated wholly to the Lord. When they rise, they do not earnestly implore help from God, to enable them to improve their time aright, and to sanctify to them the ordinances of his grace. When they come up to the house of God, they do not endeavor to get their minds duly impressed with a sense of the importance of the work in which they are engaged. *When hearing the blessed word of God, they do not receive it as the word of God himself to their souls: nor, when his seed has been sown in their hearts, do they go and harrow it in by prayer*. They attend on the duties of the Lord's-day as a form; and never call themselves to an account at the close of the day, how they have improved it, or what blessing they have obtained, or whether they are one jot nearer to Heaven. Is it to be wondered at that these persons never make any advance in religion? What kind of a crop would the gardener have, if he were equally careless about his agricultural pursuits? Here, then, is the true reason why the most faithful ministers labor, as it respects the greater part of their hearers, in vain.

A person who has attained to the age of forty-two has had no less than six entire years of Sabbaths. What might not such a one have attained, if he had improved them for the end for which they were given? What knowledge of divine truth, what enjoyment of the Divine presence, and what fitness for the heavenly inheritance? Yet are there many who have made no more advance in any of these things, than if no such opportunities had ever been afforded them. I charge you, brethren, that, whatever guilt you may have contracted by your abuse of past Lord's-days, you begin this day to improve them for your eternal good, that they may not rise up in judgment against you, to your everlasting confusion.

***~~3. The Sabbath thus improved, will be a foretaste of the eternal Sabbath to our souls—~~***

There is a rest remaining for the people of God. And, O! what a rest will that be—an entire rest of the soul in God! a total absence of every disquieting thought! a complete enjoyment of the Divine presence, and a perfect exercise of all our faculties in His service!

In proportion as we spend the Lord's day aright, this is our frame in this life: and our Sabbaths on earth are a preparation for, and a prelude to, our eternal rest. Say, brethren, is it not desirable to enjoy, thus, what I may call a *Heaven upon earth*? Do not grudge the labor or the self-denial that are necessary for the attainment of this state. Richly will the fruit repay the labor, and the recompense reward the toil experienced in the pursuit of it.

See on a dying bed those who have employed their Sabbaths according to the will of God—will you find no difference between them and the careless votaries of pleasure? And, follow the two to the bar of judgment; and will you find no great distinction between them there? I say then, to every one among you: Fulfill your duties to the world, with zeal and diligence, on the six days that are allotted you, though not without a careful waiting upon God; for you may be "not slothful in business, and yet fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;" but, on the Sabbath, live exclusively for God, and seek to be wholly "in the Spirit on the Lord's-day."

***~~And now suffer, I pray you, a word of EXHORTATION—~~***

Consider, brethren, how many Sabbaths you have lost; and not one of them can ever be recalled.

Consider, too, how few may yet remain to you. It is possible that, to someone here present, this very Sabbath may be the last. O! what bitter regret will arise in your minds, if you are called into eternity before the interests of your immortal souls have been secured! Do not delay this necessary work—do not arm death with terrors so appalling, as those must be which you will have to encounter in a dying hour, on a retrospect of your past advantages, and in the prospect of your future doom. Reflect, rather, how glorious your prospects will be on the borders of eternity, if now you give yourselves up wholly to your God; and how "abundant an entrance will then be ministered unto you into the everlasting kingdom of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

I would that you would all set that day before you; and then I should have but little occasion to press upon you a due improvement of the Lord's day. But, I readily acknowledge, you cannot do this of yourselves. Yet you are not thereby justified: for the Spirit of God would assuredly be poured out upon you, if you would seek his influences; and through his mighty agency you should be *raised to holy contemplations and to heavenly delights*. May a Pentecostal effusion of that blessed Spirit be now experienced among you, and your present delight in God be a pledge and foretaste of your eternal blessedness!

#2479

***~~John's Vision~~***

***~~[Revelation 1:12–17a](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.12â17a)~~***

Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His *head*and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His *feet*were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead!

In order to obtain the Divine blessing, it is necessary that we should wait upon God in all the ordinances of his appointment. Yet God has not so restricted his favors, but that we may expect the communication of them to our souls wherever we are, provided our neglect of his instituted means proceed from imperious necessity, and not from an indifference to his commands. John was banished to the Isle of Patmos, where he had no opportunity of assembling with the Church of Christ, and of sanctifying the Lord's day in the way to which he had been accustomed. But he sought the Lord in secret, and "was in the Spirit," that is, in a holy heavenly frame, "on the Lord's day," and what was wanting to him in respect of external advantages, was abundantly compensated by an extraordinary vision of his Lord and Savior.

We will,

***~~I. Illustrate this vision—~~***

In doing this, it will be proper to notice,

***~~1. The PERSON who appeared to him—~~***

This, though said to be "like the Son of man," was not a created angel, but the Son of man himself, even that Jesus, "who had been dead, but was living again, and was alive for evermore." This glorious person appeared to John in a manner suited to the characters and circumstances of the different Churches; and in the epistles, written to them, reference is continually made to this description of him. He is here described in his situation, garments, appearance, voice, and attitude.

**1.** In his SITUATION.—There was in the temple a golden candlestick with seven lamps, to which it was the priest's office to attend. This candlestick, which on account of the number of the lamps is considered as seven, represented the seven Churches of Proconsular Asia.

And "the Son of man standing in the midst of them," denoted, that he inspected the state of Churches and individuals, to observe how their light shone, to replenish them occasionally with fresh supplies of his Spirit, and, by seasonable trials in a way of providence or of grace, to trim them, as it were, whenever their dimness called for his special interposition.

**2.** In his GARMENTS.—The garments which he wore were such as were appointed for the high-priest: and by this clothing he intimated, that, though he was in glory, he still executed the priestly office, presenting his blood before the mercy-seat, and "ever living to make intercession for his people." He would have it known to the Church that he is "a Priest upon his throne."

**3.** In his APPEARANCE.—This was grand beyond all expression or conception.

His hoary "head," denoting both his majesty and wisdom, marked him out as "the Ancient of days."

His fiery "eyes" evinced that he searched the heart and tried the reins, and penetrated the inmost recesses of the soul.

His "feet" of fine and burning brass intimated, that, as all his steps were holy, so was his procedure firm and irresistible.

His "countenance," shining as the meridian sun, displayed his excellency and glory, and his worthiness of universal love.

**4.** In his VOICE.—This, which was dreadful, like the roaring of the tempestuous ocean, showed, that, however his words had formerly been disregarded, it befits all to attend to them with the deepest humility.

**5.** In his ATTITUDE.—He "held in his hand seven stars," (which represented the ministers of the seven Churches,) and thereby intimated, that all ministers were under his direction and control, and that they ought to shine for the good of men without regarding their threatenings or assaults, since under his protection they could not but be safe.

At the same time, emitting "from his mouth a sharp two-edged sword," he declared his power and determination to subdue his enemies, and either to subject them to himself as vessels of mercy, or to cut them asunder as monuments of his indignation.

***~~2. The EFFECT of the vision—~~***

On almost all occasions the appearance even of an angel has produced much fear and terror in the minds of those to whom he came. It is no wonder therefore that such an effect should flow from the appearance of God himself. Manoah concluded that he must die, because he had seen God face to face. Ezekiel, Daniel, and Paul fell down before him, unable to sustain the brightness of his glory. Once indeed man could converse with his Maker face to face: but, since the introduction of sin into the world, he has been intimidated by a sense of guilt, and incapacitated for so high an honor; insomuch that the most beloved of all Christ's Disciples was overwhelmed at the sight of him, and "fell at his feet as dead!"

Not to insist any longer on the circumstances of the vision, we shall,

***~~II. Deduce from it some pertinent OBSERVATIONS—~~***

***~~1. They who suffer much for their Lord may expect peculiar manifestations of his power and love—~~***

John was now in banishment: yet, though suffering much by reason of hardships and privations, he was infinitely happier than Domitian on his throne. Paul also found, that, "as his afflictions abounded, so also did his consolations." Thus it shall be with all who suffer for righteousness' sake. What then have they to fear?

Need they regard the reproaches of men, when they are so highly honored by their God?

Need they be concerned about losses, when they are enriched with such invaluable communications?

Need they fear stripes, or imprisonment, when their trials may lead to such spiritual privileges as these?

***~~2. We have reason to be thankful that our Lord reveals himself to us now through the medium of men, and of the written word—~~***

We see from the example before us how much we should be disconcerted by visions; and how unfit they would be, as stated means, of edifying the Church.

But when God speaks to us by the instrumentality of men, we can attend with ease, and weigh with care whatever is brought to our ears. It is true, indeed, that many take occasion from this circumstance to despise the word, when otherwise they would tremble at it: but, on the other hand, myriads are "drawn to God by the cords of a man," who otherwise would only have brought upon themselves, like Pharaoh, an aggravated condemnation. Let us then improve this privilege; and, however weak God's instruments may be, let us attend to them with reverence, that his agency may be rendered visible in our experience—

***~~3. The brighter discoveries we have of Christ, the more shall we be humbled in the dust before him—~~***

The appearances of God to man have at all times tended to the humbling of their souls.

Abraham and Moses no sooner caught a sight of him, than they hid their faces, from a consciousness of their own extreme unworthiness.

Job, though one of the most perfect of men, confessed himself "vile," and "abhorred himself in dust and ashes."

Even the seraphim before the throne make use of their wings to veil their faces and their feet, and confess thereby that they are unworthy either to serve or to behold their God.

Would not a view of the Lord in his glory make *us*also to cry out, "Woe is me, I am unclean!" Yes: a discovery of created things may puff us up—but a sight of God himself cannot but abase us in the dust—

***~~4. There is a day coming when the most stout-hearted sinner will tremble before him—~~***

If John, who had lain in the bosom of his Lord, and had seen him transfigured on the holy mount, and was in himself so eminently holy, so highly beloved—if even he fell at the Redeemer's feet as dead, then what will the ungodly do in the day of judgment? If, when God spoke from Mount Sinai, the Israelites were so terrified as to desire that he would speak to them no more in such a way; and "Moses himself exceedingly quaked and feared;" then how shall not the wicked tremble in that day, when Jesus shall appear in all his glory to judge the world? Let them laugh now if they will: but they will soon "call upon the rocks to fall upon them, and the hills to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb!" O that today, while it is called today, they would hear his voice, and no more harden their hearts against him!

#2480

***~~Christ's Power Over the Invisible World~~***

***~~[Revelation 1:17b](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.17b), [18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Revelation 1.18)~~***

And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death!'

MAN, while he continued in a state of innocence, communed freely with his Maker face to face: but from the time that sin entered into the world, he has dreaded the presence of the Most High, and fled from it with fear and trembling. Whenever God has been pleased to appear to any of his people, the sight has uniformly filled them with terror; and, in some instances, almost deprived them even of life. This was the effect produced by a vision given to John. Our blessed Lord, in a habit somewhat resembling that of the high-priest, revealed himself to his beloved Disciple: and so august was his appearance, that John, unable to endure the sight, fell at his feet as dead. But our Lord, in condescension to his weakness, dispelled his fears by making known to him the perfections of his nature, and the offices which in his mediatorial capacity he sustained.

In discoursing on his words we shall consider,

***~~I. Our Lord's record concerning himself—~~***

A more glorious description of Jesus is not to be found in all the sacred writings: he declares himself to be,

***~~1. The eternal God—~~***

The terms, "the first and the last," are intended to express eternity: and, in this view, it is an incommunicable attribute of Jehovah. It is often used to describe God in places where he contrasts himself with the gods of the heathen: and it always characterizes him as infinitely superior to all creatures. But Jesus here arrogates it to himself. Eternity had been ascribed to him both by Prophets and Apostles: but he here claims it himself as his own prerogative; for, notwithstanding he was in the form of a servant, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Hence then it is evident that Jesus is one with the Father, "in glory equal, in majesty co-eternal," God over all, blessed for evermore.

***~~2. The living Savior—~~***

He, whose brightness now exceeded that of the meridian sun, once hung upon the cross. But, says he, "though I was dead, yet I am the living One, possessed of life in myself, and the source of life to others; and immutably living, to carry on the work which I began on earth." "Behold" this with wonder, yet with a full assurance of its truth; for I, the "Amen," "the true and faithful Witness, declare it unto you." Now as the former assertion shows us what he was in his divine nature, this informs us what he is in his mediatorial office. "He died for our offences, and rose again for our justification;" and is, not only our advocate with the Father, but the head of vital influence to all that believe.

***~~3. The universal Sovereign—~~***

By "Hell" we are to understand, not the habitation of the damned only, but the whole invisible world; and "death" is the door of introduction to it. Now to "have the keys" of these, is to have the power over them, together with the entire appointment of men's states in reference to them. And this power does Jesus exercise. Whoever he will, and in whatever time or manner he sees fit, he consigns to death, and fixes instantly in Heaven or Hell: "He opens and no man shuts; he shuts, and no man opens." Hence it appears that every event in this world also must be under his control; and consequently, that he is the universal Sovereign.

From the encouraging address which accompanied this record, we are led to consider,

***~~II. Its tendency to comfort and support the soul—~~***

When a similar vision was given to Daniel, its effects, which were also similar, were counteracted in the same manner. Now this record of our Lord was well calculated to dissipate the fears of John; and may well also be a comfort to us,

***~~1. Under apprehensions of temporal calamities—~~***

Impending dangers and distresses will often excite terror, and overwhelm the soul with anxious dread. But what ground of fear can he have, who has the eternal God for his refuge? What injury can arise to him, whose soul is in the Redeemer's hands, and for whose benefit all things are ordered both in Heaven and earth? "Not a hair of his head can perish" but by special commission from his best Friend. "Thousands may fall beside him, and ten thousand at his right hand;" but "no weapon that is formed against him can prosper." If his eyes were opened to behold his real situation, he might see himself encompassed with horses of fire, and chariots of fire: and, standing as in an impregnable fortress, he might defy the assaults of men or devils. If his God and Savior be for him, none can be against him.

***~~2. Under fears of eternal condemnation—~~***

No man can reflect upon his own character without feeling that he deserves the wrath of God: and every one that is sensible of his own demerits, must tremble lest the judgments he has deserved should be inflicted on him. Yet a just view of the Savior may dispel his fears, and cause him to "rejoice with joy unspeakable." Does his guilt appear too great to be forgiven? He who offered an atonement for it, is the eternal God. Do doubts arise respecting his acceptance with the Father? Behold, that very Jesus who made atonement for him, ever lives to plead it as his advocate, and to present it before the mercy-seat. Do death and Hell appal him with their terrors? they are altogether subject to the control of Jesus, whose power and faithfulness are pledged for the salvation of all his ransomed people. To the weakest then we say in the name of this adorable Savior, "Fear not," though you are "a worm, you shall thresh the mountains;" and though you are the smallest grain that has been gathered from the field, you shall be treasured safely in the granary of your heavenly Father.

***~~Application—~~***

We cannot conclude the subject without applying it to those who are ignorant of Christ. Surely we must not say to you "Fear not;" but rather, "Fear and tremble," for he whom you have despised is the eternal God; and ever lives to put down his enemies, and to make them his footstool. He has only, as it were, to turn the key of the invisible world, and your souls will be locked up in the prison from whence there is no redemption. O consider this, you that live unmindful of this adorable Savior; and prostrate yourselves at his feet, while his offers of mercy are yet extended to you.

#2481

***~~Epistle to the Church in Ephesus, part 1~~***

***~~[Revelation 2:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.1)~~***

Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus write: These things says he who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlestick.

IN the foregoing chapter, the description given of our blessed Lord has been considered in one connected and comprehensive view. But, in the different epistles, a portion of that character is selected, as appropriate to the subject-matter of each: and it is of great importance, therefore, that we consider every portion by itself, in order that we may obtain a more accurate knowledge of him, and have our minds more deeply impressed with a sense of his transcendent excellency and glory.

It is with this view that I now confine myself to the words which I have just read: and, if they appear at first sight uninteresting, as not having any practical bearing upon our conduct, we shall soon find that they are indeed *most instructive to our minds, and are well calculated to be influential also on our hearts and lives*.

The city of Ephesus being the capital of the province of the Lesser Asia, and the nearest also to the Isle of Patmos, where John was now a prisoner for the Lord's sake, the first epistle was written to the Church in that place. The substance of the epistle will be considered in our next discourse. At present, we notice only the character of our blessed Lord, as stated in the introduction to it. In this is set forth his interest in all the Churches, and his constant care,

***~~I. For the protection of his MINISTERS—~~***

In the close of the last chapter, the mystery contained in the seven stars which John saw in the right hand of Jesus, and of the seven golden candlesticks amidst which he walked, is explained. The seven *stars*represented the angels or ministers of the seven Churches; and the seven *candlesticks*represented the seven Churches themselves.

***~~Now, ministers are not unfitly compared to "stars"—~~***

They are fixed in their respective orbits by God himself: yet have they no proper luster of their own: they shine by a borrowed light; and reflect the glory of the Sun of Righteousness, from whom alone all light proceeds: "Christ is that true light, which enlightens every man that comes into the world. They are, however, of the greatest service to mankind, in that they shine in the midst of darkness, and are useful to conduct the mariner over the tempestuous and trackless deep, to his desired haven.

***~~But the very light which they reflect exposes them to many and great dangers—~~***

Those whose light is the brightest, and whose efficiency is most amply displayed, have been always most opposed, both by men and devils. Against whom did men ever combine with such unanimity and malignity as against our Lord Jesus Christ? or whom did all the powers of darkness ever so labor to destroy? After him, his Apostles were the great objects of their combined hostility: nor was there any effort which these enemies did not make for their destruction.

Thus also it has been in every age: those who have most resembled Christ, on account of their superior light, been most exposed to the assaults of those who have "loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

***~~Our blessed Savior, however, "holds them all in his right hand"—~~***

He protects them against the assault of every enemy. Numberless as were the efforts made to destroy both Peter and Paul, none could prevail against them, until they had completed and fulfilled the work assigned to them.

"Satan would have sifted *Peter*as wheat;" and would have winnowed him away as chaff, if "our blessed Lord had not prayed for him, that his faith might not ultimately fail."

And *Paul*would have sunk under the pressure of "the thorn in his flesh, the messenger of Satan that was sent to buffet him," if our blessed Lord had not supplied him with "grace sufficient for him."

And who among the servants of the Lord would ever have been able to stand, if "He who holds the seven stars in his right hand" (the hand of power) had not upheld them? But, as strengthened by him, the very weakest of men is strong, and may set at defiance all his enemies; not all of whom combined "can ever pluck them out of his hand." Our blessed Lord, while holding them in his hand, bids them to shine: and *every one of them is immortal, until his work is done*.

The same incessant care also does our Lord exercise,

***~~II. For the edification of his PEOPLE—~~***

***~~The Churches are compared to "candlesticks"—~~***

There was in the tabernacle a candlestick of pure gold, having seven lamps, which burned continually, to give light in that holy place. And fitly did this represent the saints, into whom our great High-priest has poured the oil of his grace, and whose souls he has kindled by that sacred fire that came down from Heaven. "They shine as lights in the dark world, and hold forth to all around them the word of life."

***~~Amidst these our great High-priest walks, to keep them from extinction or decay—~~***

It was the office of Aaron and his sons to keep these lamps ever burning; furnishing them from time to time with fresh oil; and trimming them, as occasion required, with "the golden snuffers." And thus does our great High-priest inspect his Church and people; supplying their every need, and administering to them such correction as their necessities require.

Without his care, where is there in the universe a lamp that would not have been extinguished long ago? Perhaps we may have sometimes been ready to complain of the *afflictions*which we have been called to sustain. But the truth is, that these have been as the pruning-knife in the hand of the gardener, or rather as the snuffers in the hand of him who superintends the lamps.

Nor is it written in vain, that "the snuffers were of gold," for every visitation, whether in providence or in grace, which subserves our spiritual and eternal interests, is invaluable; and should be so regarded, even while we are writhing under its immediate pressure. We should always bear in mind the *end*for which our pains are inflicted. God is not like an earthly parent, who may unjustly chastise us: no, he always "chastens us for our profit, that we may, in a more enlarged measure, be partakers of his holiness."

**APPLICATION**.

***~~1. Do we not then here see our INDISPENSABLE DUTY?~~***

Yes, whether ministers or people, our duty is to *shine*; to shine for the benefit of others, and for the honor of our God. Of the former I forbear to speak, any further than to bear my testimony to this, that the Lord Jesus Christ alone has enabled me to set the true light before you, and has preserved me in my station to this hour. What Paul said before Agrippa, I hope I may say before you, that "having obtained help from God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come."

To you I say, Remember the *end*for which the Lord Jesus Christ has imparted his Holy Spirit to your souls, and has watched over you with such incessant care: it is that you should shine, and that "your light should shine brighter and brighter to the perfect day."

The lamps of the candlestick were seen only by those who were within the tabernacle: but your light must shine before the whole world. The command is, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." Deprecate, therefore, nothing that may increase your splendor: but put yourselves unreservedly into the hands of your Great High priest, that he may administer to your necessities as his wisdom shall direct, and advance his own glory by whatever means he shall judge most conducive to that end.

***~~2. Do we not then here see our most EXALTED PRIVILEGE—~~***

Whether it be protection or sustenance that we need, we are in the best hands, and under the care of unerring wisdom. Christ has said, "He will be with us even to the end of the world," and we are living witnesses to the truth of his word: for it is owing to his presence with us that "neither the power nor the policy of Hell have ever yet been able to prevail against us."

Remember, "He has within himself all fullness treasured up for us," yes, "He has the fulness of the Spirit," which he will pour out in richer abundance upon you, in proportion as you confide in him, and desire to promote his glory.

And for your satisfaction know, that "he neither slumbers nor sleeps," as did the high-priests of old, but is ever watchful over you for good. Lay aside, then, all anxious care; and leave to him "the perfecting of that which concerns you." Only be concerned to be "burning and shining lights" in your day and generation; and look forward to the time when, through his tender care, your office shall be fulfilled, and, your place of service being changed, you shall "shine above the stars in the firmament forever and ever!"

#2482

***~~Epistle to the Church in Ephesus, part 2~~***

***~~[Revelation 2:2–6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.2â6)~~***

I know your works, and your labor, and your patience, and how you can not bear them which are evil: and you have tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and have found them liars; and have borne, and, have patience, and for my name's sake have labored, and have not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love. Remember therefore from whence you are fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto you quickly, and will remove your candlestick out of his place, except you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

THE epistles to the seven Churches of Asia are not only instructive in a general view, like other portions of Holy Writ; but have this excellence peculiar to themselves, that *they set before us a vast diversity of experience in all its modifications of good and evil*, and teach us what judgment our blessed Lord will pass on the complex character at the last day. If we wanted to know how much of good we may possess, and yet be on the whole evil in the sight of God; and how far we may go towards Heaven, and yet fall short of it at last; I know not that we could select any portion of the sacred oracles that would give us such definite information as that which I have now read to you. In it our blessed Lord enters into a complete view of the Ephesian Church; to whom he here sends,

***~~I. His COMMENDATION—~~***

Three things he notices with approbation;

their unwearied labor,

their invincible patience,

and their discriminating zeal.

Much had the members of the Ephesian Church labored to fulfill the will of God. In truth, it cannot be fulfilled without great and continued labor. The metaphors by which religion is set forth in Holy Writ clearly declare, that *we cannot advance one step towards Heaven without great labor*. To "enter in at the strait gate" for the beginning of our course, we must "not only seek, but strive." Seeking alone will not suffice: we must put forth all our powers, as we should in a race, a wrestling, or a warfare: and then only can we hope to succeed in religion, when we engage in it with all our might.

Moreover, "if we set ourselves to seek the Lord, we must prepare our souls for temptation." Both men and devils will exert themselves to defeat our efforts: and we shall need all imaginable patience to sustain their diversified assaults. Now the Church at Ephesus had approved themselves well in these respects, and had "borne without fainting" all the afflictions which had been laid upon them.

In these respects, too, they had been animated by the only motive that could make their service acceptable: they had done all, and suffered all, from a regard to the Lord Jesus Christ, "whose name" they had endeavored to exalt and glorify.

Our blessed Lord further mentions, with approbation, the care which the Ephesian Church had taken to examine the pretensions of those who assumed to themselves an apostolic authority, and the firmness with which they had withstood every effort that had been made to introduce among them either error in principle or corruption in practice.

In all this we see what the Christian world at large should be, if they would approve themselves to their Lord and Savior—

They must, even under the most trying circumstances, persist in obeying his commands; and must resolutely withstand all who would divert them from their purpose, or in any way shake their fidelity to Christ.

But here let me call your attention to something which may have escaped your notice, and which deserves particular remark. In mentioning with approbation the things which the Ephesian Church had done for his name, he recurs again and again to the same point; as if he felt peculiar pleasure and delight in recording anything which was done for him; even though, on the whole, the demerit of the person so preponderated, as to render him unworthy of his final acceptance. This observation extends to what was spoken of their labor and patience, and also in a peculiar manner to what was specified respecting their jealous and discriminating zeal.

From hence we learn the marvelous condescension of our blessed Lord; as also the duty incumbent on all his followers, *not to dwell more than is absolutely necessary on the faults of others, but to expatiate with delight on their virtues, even though we cannot but condemn them on the whole*.

This commendation had a powerful tendency to prepare them for,

***~~II. His REPROOF—~~***

One would have thought that persons so eminent in their outward conduct could not merit any severe reproof, but,

"They had left their first love"—

Once they were full of love to Christ; and that had for a season been the spring and source of all their obedience. But now "their love was waxed cold;" and their obedience was become rather a dictate of their *understanding*than the fruit of genuine love. As far as was visible to man, their lives were nearly the same as in their better days: but He who searches the heart saw an immense difference; there being now almost a total lack of that principle which once animated and inspired their whole conduct.

Now this, in whoever it is found, is a tremendous evil—

Some there are who regard a relaxation of their first love as a matter necessarily to be expected, and as a mark of growth rather than decay. But this idea is far from being sanctioned in our text: on the contrary, it is adduced as a ground of deep complaint, and as an evil that outweighed all that had been commended. In truth, so offensive is it to the Lord, that *nothing that can either be done or suffered for him, can be accepted of him, while he sees a decline in our affections towards him*. Even among men, this judgment would be passed upon it. If a man found his wife's regards alienated from him, he would make no account of all her services, however diligent she might be in her attention to her outward duties. And certainly God, when he says, "Give me your heart!" will be satisfied with nothing less: and to withdraw our affections from him, after having once placed them upon him, will be accounted by him a greater indignity, than if we had never made any profession of love to him at all.

It is true, indeed, that persons may *appear*to have declined in love towards him, when there has been no real diminution of their regards. A wife may not continue through her whole life to feel precisely towards her husband as she did on the day of her espousals, and yet have grown, rather than declined, in love towards him. What arose from novelty and sensible emotions, may have worn off; and yet there may be in her such an accession of higher and deeper feelings, as infinitely to overbalance any apparent loss: her esteem for him altogether, her oneness of heart with him, and her entire devotion to him, may have greatly increased. In a word, "her love may have increased in knowledge and in all judgment," while to a superficial observer, who judged of it only by some sensible emotions, it might be thought to have decayed.

So it may be with a believer towards his God—But, if there be real cause to say of him, that "he has left his first love," I hesitate not to affirm, that, if he repent not, "it were better for him never to have loved his God at all, than, after having loved him, to decline from him," and to transfer to the creature the regards that are due to God alone.

To this reproof, our Lord mercifully given to add,

***~~III. His COUNSEL—~~***

***~~All such decay as this must be REPENTED of—~~***

Not only must it not be justified, but it must be mourned over with deeply penitential sorrow. In order to see the evil and bitterness of such a state, it is well to call to mind the love of our espousals, and to compare with it the *formal*services which we now render to our God. Once, how precious were the public ordinances, in which the soul finds now but little profit! In secret, too, how sweet was the word of God; how deep the penitential sorrow which was stirred by it; and how unspeakably blessed were the promises on which his soul rested, and on which he founded all his hope before God! With what strong crying and tears, also, did he frequently draw near to God; whereas, now, *his prayers are become little better than a lifeless form!*Now this melancholy change should be brought distinctly to our view: we should "remember from whence we are fallen," and, by a comparison of our former state with our present loveless state, endeavor to produce in our souls the humiliation which the occasion calls for. In a word, we must, in the review of our past lives, be filled with shame, and sorrow, and contrition.

***~~Yet will not repentance suffice, if it is not accompanied with a cordial RETURN to all our former habits—~~***

This is of extreme importance to all who have departed from their God. They are ready to imagine, that, if they be humbled under a sense of their declensions, they shall be accepted of God. And doubtless, if they have no time to show, by newness of life, the sincerity of their repentance, we may hope that God's mercy shall be extended to them. But, if we would approve ourselves to God, we must go back to our former habits, and "do our first works," and "bring forth fruits fit for repentance." If reformation without contrition will be of no avail; so neither will contrition without an entire change both of heart and life.

To every backslidden soul, then, is this counsel given: and if there is one who does not duly follow it, God says to him, "I will come to you quickly, and remove your candlestick out of its place, except you repent."

From an *entire Church*will our Lord withdraw the light, if the members of it generally become remiss: and from an *individual*, even while his blessing is continued to the Church at large, he will withhold that supply of oil which he has neglected to implore.

My brethren, see to what the Seven Churches of Asia have long since been reduced! or see what is the state of many individuals in the Christian Church, who once professed much love, and appeared to have attained considerable eminence in the divine life! Many a *Demas*may be found at this day; and many, who, if with the stony-ground hearers they have not renounced all profession of religion, yet with those of the thorny-ground, they "bring forth no fruit to perfection."

To all, then, who have thus declined from God, I would say, "Repent, and do your first works," for you know not how "quickly" you may be left in utter and everlasting darkness! Repent then, I say; and, wherein you at any time have served your God aright, endeavor to "abound more and more."

I cannot conclude without calling the attention of those who have never yet experienced what is here characterized by the expressive designation of "a first love."

How many of you, my friends, have never known "a day of espousals" to the Lord Jesus Christ?

Say, whether you have ever seen in Christ an excellency that far eclipsed all created good, and made you desire him for your best friend and your everlasting portion?

Say, whether you have ever given up yourselves to him, as his bride, and found all your happiness in him alone?

Say, whether fellowship with him has been your chief joy?

If not, what must be your state before him? If the Church at Ephesus, who had done so much and suffered so much for him, and felt such a jealousy for his honor, yet needed to repent because they had left their first love, have not *you*cause for repentance, who have never yet loved and served him at all, but have even chosen for your friends the very persons whose principles and whose practice he utterly abhors? Yes, indeed, you must "repent, and be altogether converted!" and "become new creatures in Christ Jesus;" or you can never hope to be acknowledged by him, as his bride, in the eternal world. If "the light of the righteous rejoices, the lamp of the wicked shall assuredly be put out.

#2483

***~~Epistle to the Church in Ephesus, part 3~~***

***~~[Revelation 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.7)~~***

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the Churches; To him who overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

THOUGH all the seven Churches of Asia Minor are separately addressed in a way suited to their respective states, yet what is spoken to them may fitly be applied to all other Churches, so far as their states agree with those which are here portrayed. And we say this, because at the close of every epistle the same admonition is repeated, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear"—not what the Spirit says unto this or that particular Church, but "what the Spirit says unto the Churche**s**." And here you cannot but perceive, that, though the Lord Jesus is represented as dictating all the epistles, it is by his Holy Spirit that he dictates them: for, in every one of them you are called to receive "what the Holy Spirit says unto the Churches." Nor can you fail to notice, that, *in every one of the epistles, the promises are made to those only who overcome*. It will be proper, therefore, especially in this first epistle, that we distinctly consider,

***~~I. The character to whom the promise is made—~~***

***~~The whole of the Christian life is a state of conflict—~~***

This appears most strongly marked in this address to the Church of Ephesus. The very terms "labor and patience" clearly show that they had had much to do, and much to suffer, and much to maintain in continued exercise. And who needs be told how great a labor it is to "mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts," and to "run with patience the race that is set before us?" Or, who needs to be informed, that persecution is hard to bear, even though we be not "called to resist unto blood?" The hatred and contempt of the world, and, above all, of our own friends and relatives, are far from pleasing to flesh and blood: and yet there is no child of God that can escape this minor sacrifice, even though he is not exposed to suffer loss in respect of his life or liberty.

A person floating down the stream is unconscious of the rapidity of a current; but if he has to swim against the stream, he finds it no easy matter to proceed. So the persons who are content to move with the world, find little difficulty in their way; but those who will resist the world, and the flesh, and the devil, shall find that they have a continual conflict to maintain; and more especially when they attempt to "keep themselves in the love of God."

One would think, that, considering what mercies we experience every day and hour at the Lord's hands, it would be no difficult matter to preserve upon our souls a becoming sense of his love. But *the heart is sadly prone to backslide from God*. To avoid anything grossly evil, and to persevere in the observance of outward duties, is comparatively easy: but to walk with God, to set ourselves as in his immediate presence, to preserve throughout the day habitual fellowship with him, to have our souls so filled with love to him as to regard nothing but his approbation, and to do nothing but for his glory—this is a state of mind which it is extremely difficult to maintain. But,

***~~To those alone who overcome in this conflict are the promises made—~~***

To "run well for a season" only, will avail us nothing: on the contrary, if at any time we cease to press forward, "our latter end will be worse than our beginning." The same occasion for conflict will exist as long as we continue in the body; and every victory should encourage our efforts for still further conquests. We must "never be weary in well-doing: for then only shall we reap, if," during the season appointed for our labor, "we faint not." "We must endure unto the end," if ever we would be saved.

Nor will this appear a hard condition, if we duly consider,

***~~II. The promise itself—~~***

***~~From the tree of life in Paradise were our first parents, and all their posterity, shut out—~~***

Our first parents were permitted to eat of the tree of life: and it was to them a pledge of eternal life, as long as they should retain their innocence, and live obedient to their God. But, when they had sinned, this was no longer a pledge of life to them: and they, in going to it any longer under that character, would only have deceived their own souls. Hence God drove them out of Paradise; and set cherubim, with a flaming sword, at the entrance of the garden, to prevent their return to it, and to keep them especially from the tree of life.

It is not that God intended wholly and eternally to cut them off from all hopes of life. On the contrary, he revealed to them, that One should in due time spring from the woman, and effect, both for them and their posterity, a deliverance from the evils in which they were involved. He told them, that "the Seed of the woman should enter the battle with their great adversary, and bruise the serpent's head." True, indeed, he would himself die in the conflict; but "through death he should destroy him who had the power of death, and deliver those" whom that powerful adversary had enslaved.

***~~Through that adorable Savior is there a way of access once more opened to the tree of life—~~***

The tree of life now grows in the paradise that is above. It is "a tree that bears twelve manner of fruits," suited to every appetite, and sufficient for us under every state and condition of life. Even "the very leaves of it are effectual for the healing of all the nations of the world." To that, even in this world, may every valiant soldier have access; and from it shall he derive all that support to his soul which it afforded to our first parents in their state of innocence: and every fruit that he gathers from it shall be to him a pledge that he shall eternally enjoy all the blessings of salvation: yes, even here shall it be to him "a pledge of his everlasting inheritance."

My dear brethren, this privilege is ours, if we fight a good fight; and when we have finally vanquished our spiritual enemies, we shall go and sit under the shadow of this tree to all eternity! O! who can conceive the exquisiteness of the flavor of its fruits, when we shall gather them in the immediate presence of our God? Who shall say what it is to see our God face to face; what it is to hear and taste the expressions of his love; what it is to behold and participate his glory? And who can conceive what a zest it will give to all our joys, to know that they are secured to us forever; and that, when once we are in that paradise, we shall go no more out? Well, this, believer, is held forth to you as the reward of victory: and it shall surely be accorded to you, if you hold out unto the end. Only "be faithful unto death, and God will give you the crown of life."

APPLICATION—

Let me, however, offer to you a beneficial caution:

***~~1. Learn to have just views of your reward—~~***

The reward is held forth to those who *overcome*. But you must not overlook the terms in which the promise is made: "To him who overcomes will I give." Eternal life is the gift of God, from first to last. "Death is the wages of sin; but eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Our being called to maintain a conflict does not render it at all the less a free gift: our conflicts can never merit it; they can only prepare us for it, even as a medicinal process may prepare the body for the enjoyment of perfect health. When our Lord said, "Labor for the food which endures unto everlasting life," he added, "which the Son of man shall *give*unto you." The gift will not be the less free because we labor for it; but, by the imposing of that condition, a distinction is made which to all eternity will justify God in the bestowment of his gifts.

Never, then, imagine that your conflicts, however arduous, will *deserve*life: they will only "render you fit for" the enjoyment of Heaven; and evince, that, in the communication of his blessings, God does put a difference between the evil and the good. If it be said, that "they who do God's commandments are said to have a right to the tree of life," I grant it: but it is a right founded only on the promise of your God. Your merit, in your best estate, is found only in Hell! It is the grace of God alone that exalts any soul of man to Heaven.

***~~2. Never relax your efforts for the obtaining of your reward—~~***

Unhappily, many are but little aware what enemies they have to contend with. *Men are extremely blind to their besetting sins. All of us readily discover sin in others: but few are conscious of sin in themselves*. This, then, I would say to you: Learn, from the very weaknesses of others, to distrust yourselves: and beg of God to show you what are those peculiar lusts which you are most concerned to discover and withstand in your own hearts. It is very painful to see how grievously persons, on the whole pious, often fail in some particular disposition or habit. We all take too partial a view of our duty: and not a few remain so much under the power of some unsubdued corruption, that we are constrained to doubt what their state will be in the eternal world. I must, therefore, entreat you all to search out your besetting sin; and to "fight, as it were, neither with small nor great, but with the king of Israel." If you overcome your enemy on that point, there will be little doubt of your vanquishing him on every other. But remember, the conflict must be maintained even to the end; and then only must you put off your armor, when God calls you from this field of battle, to the full enjoyment of your reward!

#2484

***~~Epistle to the Church in Smyrna, part 1~~***

***~~[Revelation 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.8), [9a](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Revelation 2.9a)~~***

Unto the angel of the Church in Smyrna write: These things says the first and the last, who was dead, and is alive. I know your works.

SMYRNA was at that time, next to Ephesus, the largest city in the Proconsular Asia. As in the former epistle we made the description of our blessed Lord a distinct subject for our consideration, so we shall do also in this epistle to Smyrna; deferring to another section the *subject matter*of the epistle itself, except so far as the mention of it is necessary to the elucidation of our Lord's character. The points which we propose to notice are,

***~~I. The description given of our blessed Lord—~~***

There are two things spoken of him; the one denoting his Godhead, the other his manhood.

***~~He is "the first and the last"—~~***

Now, I would ask, Whom can these words designate, but the eternal and immutable Jehovah? In the Scriptures of the Old Testament he frequently describes himself by these very terms: "Who raised up the righteous man from the east, gave nations before him, and made him rule over kings? I the Lord, the first, and the last; I am He." Again he says of himself, "Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am He: I am the first, I also am the last." If it could be supposed that any but Jehovah should be the *first source*, and the *last end*of all, let another Scripture determine that point: "Thus says the Lord (Jehovah), the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord (Jehovah) of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God. Is there a God besides me? Yes, there is no God; I know not any."

***~~He "was dead, and is alive"—~~***

This can refer to none but the Lord Jesus Christ, "who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification."

But it may be asked, How can these two agree? I answer, the former title is again and again given him in this book of Revelation: and it is also repeatedly given in conjunction with the latter title. In the former chapter, where a full and large description is given of the person who appeared to John, He said of himself to John, "Fear not: I am the first, and the last: I am He who lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." And, in my text, this is the very part of that description expressly selected to be addressed to the Church at Smyrna: "These things says the first and the last, who was dead and is alive." Here the parts cannot possibly be separated: you may as well say, that "he who was dead" is a different person from him "who is alive," as disjoin, and apply to different persons, what is here said of him as *God*and as *man*. He is God and man in one person, "Emmanuel, God with use." He is the same person of whom the Prophet Isaiah spoke, saying, "To us a Child is born, to us a Son is given: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

Now, to have a just view of him in this complex character, is of infinite importance. And, to bring the subject before you, I will show,

***~~II. The particular bearing which this description of our Lord has upon the main subject of the epistle—~~***

In this epistle the Church of Smyrna is warned to expect bitter persecution; but the Savior says to her, "Fear none of those things which you shall suffer." And in that precise part of his character which he brings before them, he says, in fact: To dispel all fear of your persecutors, bear in mind,

***~~1. My all-controlling power—~~***

"I am the first and the last," your persecutors would have had no existence but for me; nor can they do anything which shall not be over-ruled for my glory. The devil will stir up against you all his vassals; and they will lend themselves to him as willing instruments to destroy you. But I will limit all their efforts; so that they shall not be able to effect anything beyond what I will enable you to bear, and over-rule for your good.

To this precise effect he speaks to all his Church by the Prophet Isaiah: "Behold, they shall gather together, but not by me: whoever shall gather together against you shall fall for your sake." You are afraid of the weapons which they are now forming for your destruction, but, Behold, I have created the smith that blows the coals in the fire, and that brings forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. The very strength he is exerting, he derives from Me: and I tell you, that No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper!

***~~2. The interest I take in your welfare—~~***

For you I died; and for you I live. It was altogether for the purpose of expiating your guilt, that I assumed your nature, and expired upon the cross: and it was in order to carry on and perfect your salvation, that I rose from the dead, and ascended to Heaven; where now I live, as your advocate and intercessor; yes, and live too as the head over all things, that I may accomplish, both in you and for you, all that your necessities require. Reflect on this; and then say, whether, having myself suffered, being tempted, I am not disposed to support my tempted people; and whether, having all power committed to me in Heaven and in earth, I will allow any to pluck you out of my hand?" Are not my death and resurrection a sufficient pledge to you, that none shall ever separate you from my love? Place, then, your confidence in me; and know, that, however your enemies may look upon you as sheep appointed for the slaughter, you shall, through me, be "more than conquerors over all."

***~~3. The honor and happiness that await you—~~***

You are predestined by my Father to be conformed to my image. Behold me, then, as dying, and as yet alive; yes, as living forever at the right hand of God. This is the process that is prepared for you. Whether you be carried to death, or only to prison—it shall be equally a step to your advancement to the very throne which I now occupy. Only suffer with me, and you shall surely reign and be glorified together with me. And, when you see how I have endured the cross and despised the shame, and am set down at the right hand of God, will you be afraid or ashamed to follow me? Look at the noble army of martyrs, who loved not their lives unto death, see them before the throne of God, and inquire how they came there. And my angel shall inform you, "These all came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: therefore are they before the throne of God." Be then, a follower of them, even of those who through faith and patience now inherit the promises. You see how I have recompensed their fidelity; and to you I say, "Be faithful unto death; and I will give you a crown of life."

***~~As a fit APPLICATION of this subject, learn, my brethren—~~***

***~~1. To contemplate and to estimate the character of Christ—~~***

In circumstances of trial, we are too apt to contemplate only the power of our adversaries, or our own weakness; whereas we should look chiefly, if not exclusively, to*Him who reigns on high, and orders everything according to his own sovereign will and pleasure*. For thus says the Lord: "Do not call conspiracy everything that these people call conspiracy; do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it. The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread, and he will be a sanctuary." To act otherwise, is folly in the extreme. "Who are you, that are afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be as grass; and forget the Lord your Maker?" Only have worthy thoughts of your Lord and Savior, and you may defy all the efforts that either men or devils can make against you.

***~~2. To avail yourselves of his promised aid and support—~~***

He tells you, "I will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on me, because he trusts in me." See how David was kept; and how Paul, and thousands of others who have trusted in him: and will not his grace be alike sufficient for you? Be it so, "You are weak. Then his strength shall be the more glorified in your weakness." But you are a mere "worm." Still fear not; for "though a worm, you shall thresh the mountains." But you can do nothing. Then trust in Him; and he will do all things. For this is his word to every believing soul; "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness."

#2485

***~~Epistle to the Church in Smyrna, part 2~~***

***~~[Revelation 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.9), [10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Revelation 2.10)~~***

I know your works and tribulation, and poverty, (but you are rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which you shall suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days: be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life.

THIS Church stands highly honored among those to which the epistles were written: for no fault was found in them, nor any ground of complaint so much as intimated to them. Our Lord's address to them is altogether laudatory and encouraging. That we may enter into it more fully, let us consider,

***~~I. His testimony respecting them—~~***

In common with all the other Churches, he says to them, "I know your works," and then, in reference to their conduct, he gives his testimony,

***~~1. In a way of direct affirmation—~~***

"I know your tribulation, and your poverty: but you are rich." Doubtless their sufferings had been great; for they had been reduced to the most abject "poverty," and were utterly destitute of all the comforts of life. (To interpret this "poverty" as relating in any respect to poverty of spirit, is quite contrary to the whole scope of the passage: for poverty of spirit, so far from standing in opposition to true riches, is itself the truest riches.) But, in the midst of all their distress, our Lord, whose judgment is altogether according to truth, declared them to be "rich." For, first, they possessed **faith**, as the principle of all their obedience, and as the root of all their other graces. And could they, when possessing so inestimable a gift, be called poor? No, they possessed that which was of more worth than the whole world. It was truly a "precious faith," "more precious than gold," yes, than much fine gold.

Next, they enjoyed the **favor of their God**. "As believers in Christ, they could not but have peace with God." Granting, then, that they had not a place where to lay their head, as far as it respected this world, could they be poor who were privileged to repose their souls in the bosom of their God? They poor, with all their sins forgiven, and their names recorded in the book of life! Abhorred be the thought! If they were even dying with hunger and thirst, they were truly rich.

Further, they enjoyed **peace in their own souls**. Who can estimate to its full amount, the blessedness of having the testimony of our own conscience, that we are serving God aright? Paul himself reports it to have been to him a source of the sublimest joy: and to call a man poor when possessed of that, would be to betray an utter ignorance of "the true riches."

Moreover, in addition to all their present happiness, they were authorized to expect, in the eternal world, "an eternal weight of **glory**" proportioned to their sufferings. How could their present "afflictions appear any other than light and momentary," when they were the means of opening to their view such a prospect as this? What! poor with such "an inheritance—an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and never-fading, reserved for them in Heaven; and they themselves reserved by God for it!" No, they were "rich," truly rich, unspeakably rich; rich in possession, and in hope as well!

***~~2. In a way of most striking contrast—~~***

There were among them "some who said they were Jews, but were not; but rather were the synagogue of Satan." Whether these were Jews zealous for the law of Moses, or Christians who confounded Judaism with Christianity, we do not certainly know. The unbelieving Jews were bitter persecutors; and were ever ready to accuse even our Lord himself of blasphemy, because he called himself the Son of God, and arrogated to himself a power to forgive sins.

Paul, previous to his conversion, may be taken as a sample of Jewish bigotry, and of the envenomed malice with which they persecuted the Church of God. He thought indeed, at the time, that he was "doing God service," but when he came to have an insight into his true character, he saw that "He was the blasphemer; and not those whom he so injuriously persecuted." But it is more probable that the persons here spoken of were by profession Christians: for *the terms "Jew" and "Israel" are often used as designating the people of God under the New Testament dispensation*. If there were lewd idolatrous Balaamites and Nicolaitans among the churches, we may well suppose that there were also Judaizing Christians, who blended the Law with the Gospel, and utterly subverted the Gospel of Christ. Such persons, even "if they had been angels from Heaven, were to be held accursed," as being, under a pretense of zeal for Moses, the most specious and successful agents of the devil.

Now these persons "said they were Jews," and valued themselves highly on their zeal; and were quite "rich" in their own estimation; while they held in utter contempt their poor suffering fellow-Christians, who endured so much tribulation for their adherence to Christ. But however different was the outward aspect of these two parties, their real state was the very reverse of that which it appeared to be: these latter, in the midst of all their outward prosperity were poor; but the former, in the midst of all their poverty, were rich.

Thus did our Lord's testimony exactly accord with what had been before declared by the Apostle Paul; who, "though poor, made many rich; and having nothing, yet possessed all things."

Suited to this state was,

***~~II. The encouragement he gave them—~~***

They had already suffered much; and were about to suffer more for their Savior's sake. And, as we observed in our last discourse, our blessed Lord sought, in this epistle, to arm them against their impending trials, and to strengthen them for their future conflicts. For this end, he assures them,

***~~1. That their trials were all limited—~~***

Satan is the great adversary of Christ and his Church. Men are his instruments and agents (willing agents, no doubt): and in all they do, they do it as instigated by him: for it is "he who works in all the children of disobedience." But in all that he attempts, he is restrained by our adorable Lord, who allows him to proceed only to such an extent as shall eventually subserve the welfare of those whom he is seeking to destroy. Satan would have cast, not some of that Church, but all; not into prison only, but into Hell; not for ten days only, but forever; not that they might he tried, but that they might perish!

But, as in the case of Job, whom he could not touch, either in his person or his property, until he had obtained permission from God; so in their case he was under the control of an almighty power; and, in fact, "could have no power at all against the Church, except it were given him from above."

Now this was most encouraging: for, whether we suppose the "ten days" to be of a longer or shorter duration, it was most consolatory to know, that the *objects*, the *measure*, the *duration*, and *effect*of Satan's malice were all limited by the Savior himself, who would "not allow one of his little ones to perish," or the weakest of his people to be ever "plucked out of his hands." Being assured that they would "have no temptation without a way to escape," and that "all which they might suffer should work together for their good," they had no occasion for fear, but might confidently "commit themselves to the hands of an all-powerful and faithful God."

***~~2. That their sufferings should be rewarded—~~***

All he required of them was, "to be faithful unto death." They must be "ready to meet either imprisonment or death," as the occasion might require; desirous only "that the Lord Jesus should be magnified in them, whether by life or death." Nor should they think much of this sacrifice; since he pledged himself to them that "he would give them a crown of life," a reward far beyond their services; for their bliss should infinitely exceed all that they could suffer, and their honor infinitely surpass all the dishonor which they could by any means be called to endure.

Could they survey such a prize as this, and not contend for it? Would they ever repent of their labors, when they should possess this recompense? Would they not even loath themselves, that they should ever have contemplated, for a moment, the pains of martyrdom with any other thought than that of gratitude to God, who counts them *worthy*of so high an honor as that of laying down their lives for him?

Such, then, was the encouragement given to the Church at that time: and such may every believing soul now take to himself; assured that, "if he *suffers*with Christ, he shall, to all eternity, *reign*with him!"

***~~To bring this whole subject home to your own bosoms, I entreat you, brethren—~~***

***~~1. To form a correct estimate of earthly things—~~***

A carnal man, who should have seen the condition of the *Rich Man*in all his splendor, and of *Lazarus*in all his poverty—would have formed a very different estimate of their respective states from that which our Lord has taught us to form in a view of the Church at Smyrna. But I must say, that *Lazarus was the rich man, while the man rolling in his wealth was poor*.

But suppose, from being as wealthy as Dives, you are reduced, by persecutors, to the state of Lazarus; shall I then call you "rich?" Yes, in all your poverty, I will say, "You are rich!"

Let me state a case that shall illustrate this. Suppose that all you possessed in the world was a bag of copper pennies; and that an enemy should come and rob you of it by handfuls; but that for every handful of copper that your enemy should take from you, a friend should put into your pocket a handful of gold; would you, when not a single copper penny was left, account yourself much impoverished? Would you wonder at your friend, if he should say, 'I know your poverty; but you are rich?' Know then, that if, in proportion as you are injured by man, the blessings both of grace and glory are multiplied to you by God, you are not impoverished, but enriched.

Therefore I say with confidence, "Fear nothing that can come unto you." Let Satan do his worst: he is under restraint, as Laban and Esau were, when they meditated the destruction of Jacob.

You well know how a miller acts, when a flood threatenings the destruction of his mill. He allows to come upon his mill only so much of the water as shall subserve his purposes, and he turns off the rest by another sluice. So will God act towards you: "The wrath of man shall praise him; and the remainder of wrath shall he restrain."

***~~2. To have your minds altogether set on things above—~~***

To be "rich towards God," "rich in faith," and "rich in good works," and to be daily "laying up treasure in Heaven," this is the proper object of a Christian. In this way you will obtain durable riches, and "a sure reward." In this pursuit no human being shall ever fail. Mark, I pray you, the change of person in the promise which our Lord makes to the Church of Smyrna. In announcing their impending trials, he says to them, "You shall have tribulation ten days," but in the promise he makes, he speaks individually to every soul among them: "Be faithful unto death; and I will give you a crown of life." Every one may take; to himself this encouraging declaration; and assure himself, that "no weapon formed against him shall ever prosper." Only let a man continue sowing to the Spirit, and he shall assuredly, in due season, "reap everlasting life!"

#2486

***~~Epistle to the Church in Smyrna, part 3~~***

***~~[Revelation 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.11)~~***

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the Churches; He who overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death.

THIS passage, as an appendix to the epistle to the Church of Smyrna, appears at first sight to be an extraordinary anti-climax: for, in the very words preceding the text, it is said, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life." Now, *by "a crown of life" is meant all the glory and blessedness of Heaven*: it is a small thing, therefore, to a person who has obtained this promise, to tell him that he shall never be cast into Hell. But the Scriptures often speak in a way of hyperbole, as it is called; that is, under terms which, *while they express little, convey the most stupendous truths*. A remarkable instance of this kind I will mention. Jehovah, speaking to his ancient people, says, "Turn now every one from his evil way, and I will do you no hurt." What! is this all the encouragement that God gives to his people to turn unto him? May we not, at least, hope that he will do us some good? But far more was implied in this promise than met either the eye or the ear: and so it is in the promise which our Lord and Savior gives in the words before us.

In truth, if considered in their connection with the foregoing context, and according to the true import of the words themselves, they will be found to be replete with the richest instruction, and with the most consoling encouragement.

Let us, then, consider,

***~~I. The promise here given to the victorious saint—~~***

In order to see the promise in its true light, we must view it,

***~~1. In connection with the trials that awaited them—~~***

They had been told, that "Satan would cast some of them into prison; and that they would have tribulation ten days," some of them suffering even unto death. Now these were painful tidings to flesh and blood: yet, when it was considered that they would be exempt from "the second death," to which they might have been justly doomed, the prospect was greatly cheered: for the sufferings from which they were freed were penal, intolerable, everlasting; whereas those to which they were to be subjected were light and momentary, and as beneficial to themselves as they were honorable to God.

To a soul contemplating its just desert, these thoughts must have been inconceivably precious. The very contrast between what *man*would inflict on earth, and what, but for his sovereign love and mercy, *God*would have inflicted on them in Hell, must have made the deliverance appear so much the more wonderful, and the mercy given to them so much the more endearing.

***~~2. In connection with the sufferings that await the whole world besides—~~***

It is to the victor only that this promise is made. Who he is, we have before described: and all other persons, of whatever age or character they may be, must be condemned in the day of judgment, and "take their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone." *Not only notorious sinners who have rushed into all manner of iniquity, but the more decent moralists also, who have glided down the stream of this corrupt world, must perish.*It is he alone who stems the torrent of corruption which carries the whole world before it, and who urges with incessant labor his course heavenward; it is he alone, I say, who shall escape the wrath to come.

Now, then, *consider the great mass of mankind, with comparatively few exceptions, "cast into Hell, where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched*;" consider them, I say, left to "weep and wail, and gnash their teeth," in that place of torment, and "the smoke of their torment ascending up forever and ever;" and then say, whether an exemption from this lot be a small matter.

What would a soul that had been only a few hundred years in that place of torment think of such a deliverance, if it were possible for him now to be rescued from his misery? Methinks his transports would be such as a mere mortal nature would be unable to sustain. Doubtless, then, the assurance here given to the Christian who overcomes his spiritual enemies must be an occasion of unutterable joy. And, inasmuch as this promise is given by the Holy Spirit to every soldier of Christ, and "all who have ears to hear are especially invited to attend to it," we cannot but commend it to the most attentive consideration of all who are here present.

Let me now set before you—

***~~II. The pledge given us for the performance of it—~~***

There is somewhat very remarkable in the term which is translated "hurt." It does not import what we commonly mean by the word "hurt," which we would use in reference to any accidental injury we had sustained: it expresses an injury inflicted by a voluntary agent, who might well have forborne to inflict it. The sense of the passage then is, that the victorious saint shall not be "injured" by the second death; since the subjecting of him to it would be an injustice done to him. In fact,

***~~1. It would be an injury done to the person suffering—~~***

Every saint of God has fled to Christ for refuge, in a full dependence on that promise, "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." And in the strength of Christ he has "fought the good fight, and finished his course, and kept the faith, in an assured expectation that there is laid up for him, according to God's blessed word, an unfading crown of righteousness!"

Now, suppose one such person subjected to the second death; would he not say, 'I am injured? Doubtless if I am to be dealt with according to my deserts, my mouth must be shut, whatever I may suffer: but I laid hold on the Gospel, and, according to the grace given to me, complied with the terms there prescribed: I relied solely on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation; and yet endeavored, according to my ability, to fulfill his will: and I certainly do think that I have a claim to mercy; not indeed as deserving it at God's hands, but as washed in the blood of Christ, and clothed in his righteousness, and interested in all that he has done and suffered for me.'

Yes, brethren, God himself authorizes this very idea. In the Scriptures it is said, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love which you have showed toward his name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do now minister." Now, if God would account himself unjust if he neglected to recompense the good works of his people, how much more would he subject himself to that imputation if he were to cast one believing and obedient soul into Hell! Then this is a pledge to the victorious Christian, that he "shall never be hurt by the second death."

If a man who had fled to a city of refuge could not, consistently with the rights of justice and equity, be delivered up into the hands of the pursuer of blood; so neither can a believing and obedient soul be ever given up to the wrath of an avenging God.

***~~2. It would be an injury done to the Lord Jesus Christ himself—~~***

God the Father, when he entered into covenant with his Son, engaged, that "if he would make his soul an offering for sin, he should see a seed who should prolong their days, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hands." In dependence on this word, the Son of God became incarnate, and fulfilled the whole work assigned him, until he could say, "It is finished!" and he expected, of course, that, in the salvation of all who trusted in him, he should "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied."

But if he should behold one of his believing and obedient followers cast out, would he not have reason to complain, that the stipulations of the covenant were not fulfilled? When an offer was made to him, that, in the event of his undertaking to die for man, there should be a people given to him from among the tribes of Israel, he replied, "Then I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for nothing and in vain," and then the promise was enlarged to him, "It is a light thing that you should be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give you for a light to the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation unto the end of the earth."

How much more, then, might he complain, "I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for nothing," if one of his faithful followers should be cast into Hell! If one should be saved by a righteousness not derived from him, he would complain that he had died in vain: and how much more, if one whom he had washed in his blood, and sanctified by his grace, should perish! Here then is another pledge, that no victorious saint shall ever taste of the second death.

***~~3. It would be an injury done to the whole universe—~~***

All are taught to look forward to the day of judgment, as "the day of the revelation of the *righteous judgment*of God," that is, the day in which his perfect equity will be displayed. All, therefore, will expect that the rule of God's procedure, as declared in his word, shall be adhered to. Of course, they will expect that those who have believed in Christ, and by the grace of Christ have subdued all their spiritual enemies, shall be saved. But what if they should see one of these consigned over to the second death, and left to take his portion with hypocrites and unbelievers? will they not say, 'This greatly disappoints our expectations: we certainly hoped to see "a difference put between the righteous and the wicked, between those who served God and those who served him not."'

Methinks, if one such instance were about to occur, one general sentiment would pervade the whole universe; and all the saints would prostrate themselves before Jehovah, as Abraham did in behalf of Sodom: saying, "Lord, will you destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from you to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked—that be far from you. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" But we need not fear: there shall never be occasion for a remonstrance like this: and in this we have a further pledge, that no such injury shall ever be done to one believing and obedient soul.

***~~But, while I maintain this blessed truth,~~***

***~~1. Must I not take up a lamentation over those who are overcome in this warfare?~~***

I ask not what you have done in times past: I ask only, Have you engaged in warfare with all your spiritual enemies? and are you proceeding daily in a victorious career? If not, nothing awaits you but "the second death." If you have not been so wicked as others, you will not have so heavy a condemnation as they; there will be fewer or heavier stripes appointed, according to the degree of your guilt: but *Hell will be terrible to those who sustain its slightest torments; and the duration of their torments will be forever and ever*.

Look, I pray you, through the whole Scriptures, and see whether you can find one single word that promises an exemption from those torments to any soul that has not fought and overcome? In every one of these epistles, you will find the promises limited to them that overcome.

Think then, I pray you, what an awful prospect is before you. Think how soon your day of grace may be closed, and your day of retribution commence. O dreadful thought! Perhaps before another day you may be, like the Rich Man in the Gospel, "lifting up your eyes in torments, and crying in vain for a drop of water to cool your tongue!"

Will you then delay to enlist under the banners of Christ, or refuse to fight manfully under the Captain of your salvation? Will you be deterred from this by the threatenings of men? Will you fear them who can only kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do? Will you not rather fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in Hell? O! I say to you, "Fear him!"

If there were a storm of thunder and lightning, you would be filled with awe: and will you not tremble when God says, "The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all those who forget God?" and when he tells you, that "on the wicked he will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup?" O! what vivid flashes are here! what peals of thunder are here! Will you tremble at that which can only separate your soul from your body, and not at that which will separate both body and soul from God forever?

May God, in his mercy, awaken you before it be too late! and may all of you make it henceforth the one object of your lives to "flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life!"

***~~2. But to the victorious saint I must add a word of cordial encouragement—~~***

What may intervene between this and your final victory, I am not anxious to inquire. If you are fighting manfully under the banners of Christ, of this I am assured, that "no temptation take you but what is common to men; and that your faithful God will not allow you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make for you a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it."

You need not then be anxious about the future. Your enemies are all in God's hands, and can do nothing which he will not overrule for your eternal good. And how blessed will be the termination of your warfare! What shouts of victory will you give, and what plaudits will you receive from the Captain of your salvation! You have nothing to fear from the second death: on the contrary, the very stroke that separates your soul from your body shall transmit your soul to the very bosom of your God; who, in due season, will raise your body also from the grave, to partake with your soul in all the glory and felicity of Heaven. Yes; it is no fading and corruptible crown that you fight for, but an incorruptible one, which shall be accorded to you in the presence of the whole assembled universe. "Go on then, from conquering to conquer," until all enemies be put under your feet: and the recollection of your conflicts shall serve only to enhance your joys to all eternity.

#2487

***~~Epistle to the Church in Pergamos, part 1~~***

***~~[Revelation 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.12), [13a](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Revelation 2.13a)~~***

To the angel of the Church in Pergamos write; These things says he who has the sharp sword with two edges; I know your works.

IN a former epistle we have noticed, that the particular parts of our Savior's character, with which the different epistles are introduced, are suited to the subject matter of each. In this address to the Church in Pergamos, our Lord has occasion both for reproof and threatening: and therefore he describes himself as "holding the sharp sword with two edges." Now, according to the plan we have proposed, of investigating more minutely every distinct description of his person, I will now call your attention to,

***~~I. The character with which our Lord is here invested—~~***

The description here given of our blessed Lord frequently occurs in the Holy Scriptures; and, by comparing the different passages, we shall see that it holds him forth,

***~~1. As a SOVEREIGN—~~***

The word of a king, especially in despotic governments, goes forth with great authority: as Solomon has said, "Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What are you doing?" Now, by comparing our text with the larger description given of our Lord in the preceding chapter, from whence this smaller portion is taken, we shall see that *this sword is his word*, which proceeds out of his mouth: "Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." And "this word is indeed both living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword."

It is a law to every child of man: the greatest kings and princes, no less than the poorest of mankind, are bound by it, and must obey it at their peril. In reference to it there must be no demur, no hesitation, no delay. To question its authority, or to doubt its wisdom, is treason. As, in Heaven, "the angels do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word," so must it be with men on earth. There must be no resistance to him, even in thought: his word must be "mighty, to pull down every strong-hold, and to cast down every high imagination that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

***~~2. As a CONQUEROR—~~***

Armed with this sword, he goes forth in the chariot of the everlasting Gospel, conquering and to conquer. Hear the description given of him by John, towards the close of this prophetic book: "I saw Heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and he who sat upon it was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he does judge and make war.… And out of his mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treads the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he has on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.… And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse; which sword proceeds out of his mouth." Yes, truly, with this sword shall "he get himself the victory;" insomuch that "all kings shall fall down before him, and all nations shall serve him," and "all the kingdoms of the earth become his" undivided empire.

***~~3. As a JUDGE—~~***

"The word that he has spoken, the same shall judge us in the last day." Among the books that shall be opened in that day, doubtless the sacred volume shall be one, and "according to what is written therein, shall every soul of man be judged." And so the Prophet Isaiah distinctly declares: "but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist."

Then those who have resisted his authority as King, and withstood his power as a Conqueror, shall be constrained to submit themselves to him as their Judge: for "he will then appear in flames of fire, to take vengeance on them," and "will consume them with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy them with the brightness of his coming."

Having marked the character of our Lord, I will endeavor to show,

***~~II. The deep interest we have in it—~~***

It is obvious, that to the Church in Pergamos it was a consideration of vast importance; for the Lord himself said to them, "Repent; or else I will come unto you quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." And is it of less importance to us? Methinks every Church under Heaven, and every individual in the Church, should take occasion to inquire,

***~~1. What effect has the ministry of the Gospel produced upon us?~~***

The Gospel, by whoever ministered, is "the word of Christ," which should dwell in us richly in all wisdom. And by all who hear it, it should be regarded, not as "the word of man, but really and truly as the word of God." Our Lord said to his Disciples, "He who receives you, receives me; and he who receives me, receives Him who sent me." On the contrary, "he who despises, despises not man, but God." Let me then ask, What reception has the Gospel found among you? If it have produced its proper effect among you, it has pierced your inmost souls: as it is written, "The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword; piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

O brethren, inquire, I pray you, whether it have thus penetrated the inmost recesses of *your*souls, so as to discover to you the hidden abominations of your hearts, and to make you cry mightily to God for the pardon of them!

See the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, when smitten with this two-edged sword: what cries there were for mercy! "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Believe me, brethren, this is the very first effect which it will produce on you; and it must have already produced it, if you have not "received the grace of God in vain." This is the fruit which it brings forth in all the world, wherever the grace of God is known in truth.

But is there not, in too many instances, reason for God to complain, "I have hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth; I have spoken to them the great things of my law; but they have counted them as a strange thing." Yes, "though I called them unto the Most High, none at all would exalt Him?" And shall this be accounted a light matter? It was not deemed so in the case of Zedekiah, of whom God complains, "He did evil in the sight of the Lord, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the Lord." Beloved brethren, though no prophet, I also have "spoken to you from the mouth of the Lord;" and you must answer unto God for every word that has been delivered to you in his name.

Now, our blessed Lord says to you, "I know your works." And he does know them, and record them in the book of his remembrance; and will bring them forth into judgment at the last day. Let not any of you imagine, that it is sufficient to yield an outward conformity, whether in sentiment or action, to the word of God. No, indeed; if you would really profit by it as you ought, you must be as sacrifices offered up to God upon his altar. The sacrifices, you know, were slain, and were so cut down as to expose to view their inward parts; and then were consumed on the altar, together with the meat-offerings and the drink-offerings that were presented on them.

So must "you, to whom I minister the Gospel of God, be offered up as an acceptable sacrifice to God; being sanctified by the Holy God." Judge, I pray you, whether this has ever been truly wrought in you: for if the word is not thus "a savor of life to your souls, it will be unto you a savor of death," unto your heavier and more aggravated condemnation.

***~~2. What do we expect from it in the time to come?~~***

The word, my brethren, is "the sword of the Spirit;" and is raised, not to slay you, but to defeat and destroy your enemies. And it is a two-edged sword: every truth in it has a double aspect: speaking consolation to the obedient, as well as terror to the disobedient. By means of it, the Lord Jesus Christ carries on his work of grace in the souls of men; subduing all their enemies before them, and making them triumphant over all the powers of darkness. It was by the word that Christ himself repelled all the assaults of Satan in the wilderness; and by it he will "sanctify us in body, soul, and Spirit." We must therefore make use of it for this end; as it is said, "Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Regard not then our blessed Lord as an object of terror; but as "the Captain of the Lord's host," armed for your deliverance. In the epistle before us, you will find a promise, as well as a threatening; and he will show himself as mighty to fulfill the one, as to execute the other. While, therefore, you fear him as an avenger, learn to confide in him as "able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him."

#2488

***~~Epistle to the Church in Pergamos, part 2~~***

***~~[Revelation 2:13–16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.13â16)~~***

"I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth."

IN this epistle we have a mixture of commendation and reproof; and, corresponding with each, a mixture of threatening and encouragement. The promise, as before, we shall leave for a distinct and separate discourse. At present, the two points for our consideration are,

***~~I. The fidelity commended—~~***

***~~This was doubtless eminent and praiseworthy—~~***

Great were the snares with which the godly were encompassed in that city: on the one hand were *licentious professors*, who indulged in and vindicated the vilest excesses; and on the other hand were *cruel persecutors*, who were ready to drag to prison and to death all who would prove themselves faithful to their God. In truth, to such a degree did both these characters prevail, that Satan might well be said to have placed his throne there.

Yet, in the midst of all these temptations, they would not either deny or dishonor their Divine Master. They had even seen Antipas, probably their pastor, sacrificed before their eyes; and knew not but that the same fate awaited them: yet would they not renounce their holy profession, or in any respect prove themselves dissemblers with God. This was a conduct highly pleasing to God; and the Lord Jesus Christ, who knew not their works only, but all the circumstances under which those works were performed, notes them in this epistle with special approbation.

***~~The same fidelity God expects from us—~~***

We, through mercy, live in less trying times, and are in no danger of suffering martyrdom for our adherence to Christ. But we have temptations enough to prove us, whether we will serve our God in sincerity and truth. If Satan's "throne" is not here, his habitation is: for, in truth, where is the place in which he dwells not? And to those who are exempt from greater evils, the smaller evils are great. If we be not in danger of imprisonment and death for the faith of Christ, there are lighter kinds of martyrdom to which we are exposed: hatred, and contempt, and persecution in a variety of ways, are the sure portion of those who will live godly in Christ Jesus: and these are not easy for flesh and blood to bear. But we must be willing to bear whatever cross may be laid upon us. We must even learn to "glory in tribulation," for the Lord's sake; and, like Paul, to account the most cruel death a matter of thanksgiving rather than condolence, if endured for righteousness' sake. Our "faithfulness must extend even unto death, if ever we would enjoy a crown of life."

But our admiration of this Church is sadly lowered by,

***~~II. The unfaithfulness reproved—~~***

***~~However they might palliate their conduct, they deserved reproof—~~***

There were among them those who held the doctrine of the Balaamites, and of the Nicolaitans; both of whom considered it lawful to conform to idolatrous practices, and to indulge themselves in licentious habits. The *Balaamites*, it would seem, were libertines; (for Balaam knew that his practices were evil, and would bring the wrath of God on those who followed them:) and the *Nicolaitans*probably were Antinomians, who persuaded themselves that idolatrous concessions, and lewd indulgences, can consist with an adherence to the Gospel. But such persons should not have been tolerated: they should have been checked in their career: and, if they had persisted in their sentiments and habits, they should have been excommunicated.

If such "leaven were not purged out," what could be expected, but that the whole Church would in time be penetrated with its malignant influence? They should have felt a zeal for the honor of their God: they should have exercised more holy love towards the different members of their Church, and have labored to screen them from the temptations to which they were thus exposed.

And of this lethargy it became them to "repent." They well knew how Eli had been punished for not expelling his own sons from the priesthood; and they should have exercised the authority that was vested in them by Christ himself: and, if they did not repent of this their wickedness, the Lord declared "he would come quickly, and fight against them with the sword of his mouth;" denouncing against them the judgments inflicted on the Israelites whom Balak had ensnared, of whom no less than twenty-four thousand fell in one day.

***~~Nor will it suffice for us to avoid sin ourselves, if we labor not also to prevent it in others—~~***

Persons will extol charity—but what has charity to do with the allowance of known and open sin? It is not charity to "call evil good, or good evil," or to account sin to be no sin. Men will commend toleration also: but what has toleration to do with sin? Persons are to be tolerated—but not sins; and especially such sins, and more especially in the Church of God.

Paul, in reference to heresies, as well as to open lusts, gives us the most explicit direction: "A heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he who is such, is subverted, and sins, being condemned of himself." Doubtless we must be careful not to brand for heresy that which is not manifestly declared to be so in the word of God: and we must "receive in the spirit of meekness a brother that has been overtaken with a fault," even as the incestuous Corinthian was received after his penitence had been duly manifested to the satisfaction of the Church. But still our duty is clear: we must not only "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but must rather reprove them;" "looking diligently lest any root of bitterness spring up to trouble us, and thereby many be defiled.

Nor are we to beguile ourselves with the specious name of candor. Candor has respect to motives, rather than to acts. In relation to *open sin*, we must act towards the body of Christ as we would towards a diseased member of our own body: we should suffer the amputation of one member, for the purpose of preserving the whole body from disease and death: and on the same principle must the Church inflict its censures, even to excommunication, on any member, which will not be healed, and cannot be retained without danger to the whole body. And if we, through indifference, will sanction such persons, by forbearing to put them out of the Church, we must expect that Christ will manifest his displeasure against us, and inflict on us the judgments threatened in his word. If we will thus "be partakers of other men's sins, we must expect that God will also make us partakers of their plagues."

***~~Two things, then, from this subject, I would earnestly recommend:~~***

***~~1. Be FIRM—~~***

Decision of character well befits every child of God. In matters of smaller moment we can scarcely be too complying: but when "either sins or errors solicit our indulgence, we cannot be too firm," we must "hate even the garment spotted by the flesh." Perhaps in the Church you have little power to testify your abhorrence of sin: but you have in your families, and among your friends: and whatever influence you have, you should exert it for God. We are expressly told, "You shall reprove your brother, and shall not suffer sin upon him." And if you are threatened by any, on account of your adherence to Christ, your path is plain: "Fear not those who can only kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: but fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in Hell: yes, I say unto you, Fear Him."

Tell me, I pray you, Does Antipas at this moment regret the sufferings he endured, and the sacrifice he made, even of life itself, for Christ's sake? The very name here given him, "My faithful martyr," is a pledge, that neither you, nor any who shall follow his steps, will ever regret their fidelity to such a Master. "Save your life by unfaithfulness, and you will lose it: but lose it for your Lord's sake, and you shall save it forever."

***~~2. Be CONSISTENT—~~***

You would surely have thought, that those who had braved death itself for Christ's sake could not have anything to deplore. But here are the saints at Pergamos called to "repent" of their inconsistency, lest the heaviest judgments should be inflicted on them. Know, then, your whole heart and your whole soul must be under the regulation of a divine principle, and an entire consistency pervade your whole life. Religion must be carried into everything. Religion must be in the soul, what the soul is in the body. The souls sees in the eye, hears in the ear, speaks in the tongue, and actuates every member of the body: there is not a single motion which is not under its influence. Thus must every action of your life be regulated by a religious principle, and "every thought of your heart be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Then will you have nothing to fear from the two-edged sword of Christ; but be approved by him, in the day that he shall judge the world in righteousness and truth. "He knows your works;" and will be as glad to testify of them to your honor, as ever you can be to receive from him this token of his approbation.

#2489

***~~Epistle to the Church in Pergamos, part 3~~***

***~~[Revelation 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.17)~~***

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the Churches; To him who overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows saving he who receives it.

IN every one of the epistles, it is the promise that comes last: for our blessed Lord would have a free and willing service, and not a service constrained by fear. Not but that threatenings are good in their place, because they produce a holy fear and caution: but it is by the promises chiefly that God accomplishes the work of his grace within us: and when we truly apprehend them, we shall invariably experience their renewing efficacy; and be led by them to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

In discoursing on the words before us, I shall endeavor to set before you,

***~~I. The blessedness that awaits the victorious Christian—~~***

The terms used in my text require much explanation. But, when duly considered, they will be found to intimate, that, in the eternal world, the victorious Christian will have accorded to him,

***~~1. A more intimate connection with the Lord Jesus—~~***

"To him will I give to eat of the hidden manna." On manna the Israelites subsisted forty years in the Wilderness. But from the day that they ate grain in the land of Canaan, the supply of manna was withheld. There was, however, a vessel full of manna deposited with the ark, as a memorial of God's goodness to them in the wilderness. Any which the Israelites themselves attempted to hoard manna, even for a day, excepting for their use on the Sabbath-day, "bred worms, and stank;" but that which was laid up by God's command, continued good for many hundreds of years, even to the time when all the vessels of the sanctuary were seized by Nebuchadnezzar, and carried into Babylon.

Now, it must be remembered, that the manna was a type of Christ. Even to the Jews it was "spiritual food," and all who had a spiritual discernment partook of Christ in it. To us, of course, there is no such food given, so far as relates to the body: but in our souls we may feed upon it, even as they: for by faith our souls exist on Christ, and live by him, even as their bodies did by a daily participation of the manna itself. Yet it is by faith alone that we partake of this benefit. Not so when we reach the heavenly Canaan: the life of *faith*shall then cease, and the life of *sense*commence.

The manna is laid up for us within the sanctuary, by the ark of God. There is the Lord Jesus Christ himself; and there shall we be admitted to the closest possible communion with him. Even *here*our souls lived by means of him; but *there*he will be, in a far more intimate manner than he could be in this world, our very life. Here we had the *foretaste*of heavenly things: but there we shall have the *full enjoyment*.

***~~2. A more assured sense of his favor—~~***

"He will give us a white stone."—Among the Greeks and Romans, when any man was tried for an offence against the State, those who sat in judgment upon him gave their verdict by means of a white stone, if they acquitted him; or by a black stone, if they condemned him: and, on some occasions, the vote they gave was confirmed by an inscription on the stone itself.

Just so, when we arrive in the heavenly land, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Judge of the living and the dead, will put into our hands a white stone, in token that we are fully and forever justified in the sight of God.

This blessing, also, was given to us, in a measure, in this life: for there are many who are enabled to say, "We *know*that we have passed from death unto life;" yes, there are many who are privileged to possess a "full assurance of hope." But still we are in the body: and no man can tell what a day may bring forth: nor does it befit any man, who is "yet girt with his armor, to boast as one that puts it off." Here our faith must be mixed with fear: but in that day there shall be no occasion either for faith or fear; for *faith shall be lost in sight, and hope be consummated in fruition*. Yes, the very stone that declares our acquittal shall be put into our own hands; and be, to all eternity, an evidence of our acquittal, and a pledge that it shall never be reversed.

***~~3. A more exquisite enjoyment of his love—~~***

On the stone shall be a NAME WRITTEN, which no man knows, "saving he who receives it." God gave new names to many of his beloved people; to Abram, and Sarai, and Jacob, and Solomon: and a new name will God give to his victorious servants, "a name better than of sons and of daughters." Even now are we called by that august title, "The Sons of God: and the world knows us not, because it knows not him." Even now have we "a joy with which a stranger intermeddles not," and which language would fail us adequately to express. A Spirit of adoption, and the witness of the Spirit—who can comprehend, except the person that has received them? "This secret of the Lord is with those alone who fear him: to whom, also, he shows his covenant," with all its unsearchable and inestimable benefits.

But "the love of Christ, in all its heights and depths, infinitely surpasses all human knowledge," nor, indeed, shall we be fully able to comprehend it, even in Heaven. But there, on the white stone that shall be given us, will be engraved such characters as none but the possessor of that stone can comprehend.

Conceive of a soul before whom all the glory of the Godhead is displayed, and to whom all the wonders of redeeming love are revealed, and into whose bosom all the fullness of God's love is poured—and who shall estimate his joy?

The sublimest conceptions that any finite being can form of such bliss would fall as far below it, as the glimmering of the glow-worm below the luster of the noon-day sun. It must be *felt*, in order to be *known*.

Does all this blessedness await the victorious soul? Think, then, what are,

***~~II. The measures which sound wisdom will prescribe, in relation to it—~~***

Surely you have anticipated all that I can have to say under this head. Yet it will be proper, at all events, that I add my testimony to what I am persuaded must be the dictates of your minds. I say, then,

***~~1. Enlist, without delay, under the banners of your Lord and Savior—~~***

You are all, of necessity, called to be *soldiers*of Jesus Christ. In your very baptism you engaged to "fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to be Christ's faithful soldiers and servants to your lives' end. I call upon you, then, to execute the office which has thus devolved upon you.

Mark, I pray you, the restrictive clause in my text: "To him who *overcomes*will I give" all this blessedness. It is not to him that never fights at all, nor to him that "fights only as one that beats the air," no; it is to him who "wars a good warfare," and overcomes all his enemies; to him, I say, and to him *alone*, will all these blessings be given.

Grieved I am to say, that, according to this view of God's promises, there are but *few*that will ever taste the sweetness of them: but I entreat you, my brethren, to engage without delay in this warfare; and so to fight, that you may obtain the unfading crown of glory.

***~~2. Whatever conflicts you may have to sustain, never cease to fight, until you have obtained the victory—~~***

You must expect conflicts, and severe ones too, before you are liberated from your engagements. A man who fights only against his fellow-man shall have much to endure before he gains the victory: and do you think that the world and the flesh and the devil will yield without much resistance? Look at the saints that have gone before you, and you will find that "they all came out of great tribulation." Your Savior himself overcame not, but by the sacrifice of his own life. Be then ready to sacrifice your lives in this glorious contest: and as "He, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross and despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God;" so shall you also, if only you faint not, in due season "reign with him in glory for evermore!"

#2490

***~~Epistle to the Church in Thyatira, part 1~~***

***~~[Revelation 2:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.18), [19a](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Revelation 2.19a)~~***

Unto the angel of the Church in Thyatira write; These things says the Son of God, who has his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know your works.

THE similarity of *method*which is observed in all the epistles to the seven Churches of Asia Minor renders it difficult to diversify, in any great degree, our mode of treating the subjects contained in them. But, indeed, we need not be anxious about this matter; for the *subjects*themselves are greatly diversified; so that, though our mode of treating them may have an appearance of sameness, the sameness will be in appearance only, and not substantial.

We have now to consider the character of our blessed Lord in a different point of view from any in which we have seen it before: and in our investigation of this we cannot be too particular. Let us then notice,

***~~I. The description here given of our blessed Lord—~~***

It is, as all the other descriptions are, suited to the subject of the epistle itself; in which is declared our Lord's perfect knowledge of the state of every individual in that Church, and his fixed determination to give to every one of them according to his works. In the words which have been read, are set forth,

***~~1. His greatness—~~***

In the description contained in the first chapter, from whence all the detached parts of our Lord's character are taken, he is said to be "like unto the Son of Man," but here he is called expressly "The Son of God." In the former description, his *humanity*is more particularly referred to; in the latter, his *divinity*.

Not that these are always kept distinct in the inspired volume: for the name, "Son of Man," was used as equivalent with "the Son of God;" and was actually so understood by the Jews themselves, who took occasion, from his calling himself "the Son of Man," to accuse him of blasphemy, for representing himself as the Son of God, and of thereby professing himself to be "equal with God."

Paul combines the two, and shows us clearly in what sense we are to understand the title here given to our blessed Lord: it declares him to be God, equal with the Father: for "being from all eternity in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

By this name, "The Son of God," his advent had been predicted: by this name he had been repeatedly saluted by a voice from Heaven: by this name had he been acknowledged by his most favored servants: and, even in the very article of death, by the man who superintended his execution. And, when his Gospel was preached by his Apostles, this acknowledgment of his divinity was demanded of all who embraced his religion, and was deemed by them a satisfactory proof of a man's conversion to God. Let us then understand, by the title here given him, that, though "he was a child born, and a son given, he was indeed the Mighty God," even "God over all, blessed for evermore."

***~~2. His all-penetrating eyes—~~***

"He has EYES like unto a flame of fire." The power of fire, to penetrate the hardest substances, and to identify itself, as it were, with metals, so that not an atom of brass or iron, when subjected to its action, shall escape its all-pervading power, is well-known.

The power of flame also, when employed in scientific experiments, is well known, insomuch that it will reduce even diamonds to a cinder. This image, therefore, well illustrates*the all-penetrating, all-discerning eye of Jesus*, *whom not a thought that comes into our hearts, nor "an imagination of a thought," can ever escape.*

Very striking is the representation which Paul gives us of this in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "There is no creature which is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

The sacrifices, previously to their being offered upon the altar, were not only examined outwardly, but were flayed, and then cut down to the back-bone, so that all the inwards might be exposed to view, and every part be inspected with the greatest care, to see that they were perfectly free from blemish of any kind: and such is the view which the Lord Jesus Christ has of every soul. "The darkness is no darkness with him; but the night is as clear as the day."

*We may conceal matters from our fellow-creatures: yes, and much may be hid also from ourselves: but from him is nothing hidden, either as to its existence, or to its real character*: the sun itself, at noon-day, is not more clearly visible to us, than are the inmost recesses of our souls to him!

***~~3. His power—~~***

"His FEET are like fine brass." By this I understand his unchanging firmness in everything that he has decreed; and his irresistible power to execute his designs, whether it be for the salvation of his people, or for the destruction of his enemies. All his determinations, as revealed in his word, shall assuredly be carried into effect. The whole universe shall never move him from his purpose. Let a believer trust in him; and all the powers of darkness "shall never be able to pluck him out of his hands." Let an enemy persist in his rebellion against him, he shall soon find what "a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God."

In the first chapter it is said, "His feet are like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace," yes, they will not only tread down his enemies, but utterly consume all who dare to contend with him. He tells us, in this epistle, that he will give to his victorious people "power over the nations, to rule them with a rod of iron, and to break them in pieces as a potter's vessel," and he shows us, in the description here given of him, that he is fully able to confer on them the promised benefit, and to make every one of them as victorious as he himself has been.

But the character of our Lord is not a subject for speculation only: no, in every particular we should consider,

***~~II. The improvement to be made of it—~~***

***~~1. Let us admire his condescension—~~***

This epistle, though addressed to Thyatira, is designed for every Church under Heaven, and for every individual in the Church, so far as the particular expressions of it are applicable to him. Amazing is that condescension, which has induced Almighty God so to remember us, and so to consult our welfare! If the Psalmist says, "Lord, what is man, that you are mindful of him; or the son of man, that you visit him?" then how justly may we exclaim, "Lord, what are we, that you should dictate to your servant John a letter unto us, a letter for our instruction, a letter for our benefit."

If but an earthly monarch had honored us in this way, we should have accounted it a marvelous condescension: but, O! what is it to be so honored and so regarded by the God of Heaven and earth! How should we *value*these epistles! How should we *study*them! How should we *treasure*up in our hearts the inestimable truths contained in them!

Remember, I pray you, brethren, that it is "the Son of God" himself who has sent you this epistle; and prepare to receive every suggestion contained in it, as bearing the impress of his authority, and an expression of his love: and treasure up every word of it, not in your cabinet, as a curiosity to be admired, but in your inmost souls, as a record to be obeyed.

***~~2. Let us maintain integrity before him—~~***

He tells us, that "he requires truth in our inward parts," and we may be well assured that *the smallest measure of hypocrisy will be discovered by him*. In this epistle he tells us, that "all the Churches shall know that it is He who searches the thoughts and tries the hearts." At the last day, especially, "he will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts." Yes, "every secret thing shall he bring forth into judgment, whether it be good or evil."

See, then, that there be in you *no secret lust*: but let him be able to testify of you, that you are "Israelites indeed, and without deceit." And if you are not conscious of any allowed evil, be not too confident that you are really blameless in his sight; but say with the holy Apostle, "I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but He who judges me is the Lord."

***~~3. Let us confide in him for all needful support—~~***

Whom did he ever deliver up into the hands of their enemies? Are we not told, that "his name is a strong tower; and that the righteous runs to it, and is safe?" The same idea that is contained in our text, is conveyed also in those words, "He is a wall of fire round about us, and the glory in the midst of us." "A wall of fire" will not only protect those who are enclosed by it, but will destroy also their assailants. So will Christ do, with his feet like fine brass just taken out of the furnace.

Fear not, then, the assaults either of men or devils; but confide in him, expecting assuredly, that "his strength shall be perfected in your weakness." "If he has begun the good work in you, you may be confident that he will carry it on, and perfect it to the end." "To whoever he has been the Author of their faith, he will also be the Finisher." "Of those whom the Father has given him, he never did, nor ever will, lose so much as one!"

#2491

***~~Epistle to the Church in Thyatira, part 2~~***

***~~[Revelation 2:19–23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.19â23)~~***

"I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works."

IN reading these different epistles, we cannot but tremble, lest, after all our endeavors to serve the Lord, we come short at last, and, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, we be found lacking. *Truly, to be Christians indeed, is no easy task.*But "the grace of Christ is sufficient for us;" and will prove itself sufficient, if only we seek it in spirit and in truth. In dependence on that grace, let us proceed to consider,

***~~I. The characteristic EXCELLENCE of the Church at Thyatira—~~***

***~~Great were the VIRTUES for which they were commended—~~***

Our blessed Lord, who with infallible certainty "knew all their works," said to them, "I know your love, and service, and faith, and your patience." Under these expressions, I conceive, were contained their principal duties both to God and man.

Their "love" both to God and man abounded: and it was operative in every kind of "service" both to the one and to the other, according as opportunity was afforded for the exercise of love. It sprang also from the only true source of all acceptable obedience; that is, from *faith*in God, as their reconciled God and Savior. It continued also to operate under all circumstances, however difficult or distressing. No fires of persecution could quench it; no sufferings could abate its ardor: they took up their cross with cheerfulness, and bore it with constancy, and brought forth fruit with "patience;" so that "patience," as well as love, "had in them its perfect work."

What Paul said, in reference to the Thessalonian Church, John might well have applied to those at Thyatira: "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering, without ceasing, your works of *faith*, and labor of *love*, and patience of *hope*in our Lord Jesus Christ."

***~~But their chief excellence was that their PIETY had been progressive—~~***

Our blessed Lord yet further testified respecting them, that their last works had been more than their first. They had not "left their first love," as those of the Church at Ephesus had done; but had "grown in grace," and had made a proficiency in every part of their duty. Now, to this progress in the divine life God has especial regard; insomuch that, however righteous we may have been in times past, "our righteousness, if we turn away from it, shall no more be remembered; but for the sin that we have committed we shall die." It is the character of the truly righteous man, that "he holds on his way, and his hands wax stronger and stronger." His path must be like the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day." "The man who, after having put his hand to the plough, looks back, is not fit for the kingdom of God." To be "weary in well-doing," however arduous our labor may be, will deprive us of that recompense, which a persevering "continuance in it would have assured."

Whatever we may have attained, we must "abound more and more." Our "love" must be more fervent, our "service" more abundant, our "faith" more steadfast, our "patience" more invincible, and our "works" altogether more consonant with our obligations, and more consistent with our professions. Like Paul, we should "forget what is behind, and reach forward to what is before; and press on, with ever-increasing ardor, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." When this is our state, we may assuredly expect the approbation of our God.

Nevertheless, this was not the character of all in that Church: on which account our Lord proceeded to state,

***~~II. The GUILT and DANGER in which some of their members were involved—~~***

***~~A most fatal false teacher was tolerated among them—~~***

Who it was that is here designated by the name of "Jezebel," or whether there were more than one, we cannot say. It is not improbable that several were engaged in seducing others: at all events, whether one or many, they were justly called Jezebel, because of their resemblance to that abandoned woman. She, though married to Ahab, retained her zeal for idolatry, and used every device to support and propagate it.

Thus, at Thyatira, some who professed themselves Christians were idolaters in heart, and exerted themselves in the most subtle methods, to disseminate their principles; yes, they even pretended to a divine commission, to draw others to a compliance with their idolatrous practices, which in Scripture language is "fornication" and "adultery." These persons "had space given them to repent; but they repented not," and their obstinacy in sin greatly heightened both their own guilt and the guilt of those also who *tolerated*them in the Church. It is true, the members of the Church were not invested with any civil authority, and therefore could not punish the offenders with the sword: but they should have united in condemning the sentiments and conduct of those impostors, and, by a sentence of excommunication, have purged out this leaven from among them.

***~~Against those who had thus sanctioned the false teacher, our Lord denounced the heaviest judgments—~~***

In these threatenings there is a striking reference to what had been accomplished towards Jezebel and her family. She had shed the blood of Naboth in Jezreel; and both her husband's blood and her son's blood were licked by dogs, in the very same place where dogs had before licked the blood of Naboth; yes, she herself also was devoured by dogs, almost on the same spot: and soon afterwards, the whole family of Ahab, even seventy sons, were put to death.

Thus God threatened, that, for their spiritual fornication, "he would cast them into a bed, and those who committed adultery with them, into great tribulation, and that he would kill the teachers and their followers with death." He further declared, that, as in the case of Jezebel, their sin should be so visibly marked in their punishment, as to manifest to the whole Church, that the Savior, whom they thus despised, was indeed *the omniscient Jehovah and the righteous Judge of all*.

He did indeed still offer to pardon them on their repentance: but if that offer, like those which had preceded it, would be slighted, his vengeance would come upon them to the uttermost.

And is there not, in every age, a remarkable correspondence between the judgments inflicted on false teachers and the sins which they commit? The despisers of vital godliness, whether of the Infidel or Antinomian class, are filled with pride and presumption: and God "gives them over to delusion, until they believe their own lie," and "perish in their own corruptions." O that both the deceivers and deceived might "repent of their deeds!" and that all who have hitherto maintained their steadfastness might so zealously oppose the incursions of sin and error, as to "preserve" themselves, and all with whom they are connected, "blameless unto the day of Christ!" If, however, this warning is slighted, let it be remembered, that "the end of all shall be according to their works!"

***~~In CONCLUSION, I would say to every one among you—~~***

***~~1. Imitate their virtues—~~***

It is to little purpose to *call*yourselves Christians, if you are not "Christians indeed, and without deceit." If the Lord were to testify respecting the great mass of the Christian world, he must say, 'I know your works to be the very reverse of all that distinguished the Thyatira Church:

you have no love to me;

nor do you render me the services I require:

nor have you any of that faith which works by love;

nor do you bear any cross for righteousness' sake.

Your works, from year to year, are still the same, except so far as age or outward circumstances may cause them to vary: you are still the same unhumbled, unbelieving, and disobedient sinner as ever you were.'

But let it not be so with you, my brethren: let God's testimony rather be, 'I know your works—that they are altogether such as I approve; and that you are advancing so manifestly in holiness, that "your profiting appears unto all."

***~~2. Tremble, lest you be exposed to their judgments—~~***

You are continually under the eye of the heart-searching God, who sees every defect in your obedience, and *will judge you at the last day according to your works*. He requires of you, not a personal obedience only, but a constant exertion, according to your power, to promote the same in others. You are responsible to God for your influence; whether it extends to the Church at large, or is limited to the narrower sphere of your more immediate neighbors. You should feel a holy zeal for God; and should labor, according to your ability, to uphold his honor in the world.

God, I say, expects this at your hands; and he will call you to an account for the improvement of every talent committed to your charge. May you all approve yourselves faithful to him, that when he shall come to judgment, you may receive that plaudit at his hands, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord!"

#2492

***~~Epistle to the Church in Thyatira, part 3~~***

***~~[Revelation 2:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.24), [25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Revelation 2.25)~~***

But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none of her burden. But that which you have already hold fast until I come.

IN these words we have an injunction addressed to the more consistent members of the Church at Thyatira. If there were some who had been drawn aside from the path of duty by the seductions of Satan, the great mass of that Church had held fast their integrity, and approved themselves faithful to their God. They had been assaulted, and were yet in danger of being still assaulted, by persons professing a deeper insight into divine truth than others: (in fact, all innovators, whether infidels or heretics, arrogate to themselves superior wisdom, and propose their sentiments under the idea of "depths," which the poor simple-minded believers have not been able to fathom:) but "the depths" of which these deceivers spoke, were "depths of Satan" rather than of God; and the faithful members of that Church rejected with abhorrence the impious sentiments contained in them: and for this they were commended by their God; who says, "I will put upon you none other burden but this;" "What you have already, hold fast until I come," that is, 'You have been faithful in your adherence to me; and all that I require of you is that you steadfastly persevere in the same course, until I come, at the last day, to attest, and to recompense, your fidelity.

Now, the same injunction is given to the Church in all ages: so that, taking it to ourselves, we may notice,

***~~I. The duty inculcated—~~***

It is here taken for granted, that we have made some progress in the divine life. Now, whatever it be that we have attained, we should "hold it fast." We should "hold fast,"

***~~1. The truth itself—~~***

Many at this day, as well as in the apostolic age, exert all their ingenuity to invalidate and subvert the truth. Some will call in question even the divine authority of the Bible: others will deny the divinity of our blessed Lord, and the atonement which he has made for sin. Others again, like the Pharisees of old, will blend the law with the Gospel, as a joint ground of hope before God: while others, under an idea of magnifying the grace of God, will deny that the law is to be regarded by us as a rule of life. But we must be on our guard against error of every kind, and "hold fast the form of sound words" which the holy Apostles have delivered unto us. The Gospel in itself is extremely simple: 'We are fallen creatures, deserving of God's wrath and indignation. The Lord Jesus Christ has come to restore us to the favor and the image of God; to his *favor*, by making satisfaction for our sins; and to his *image*, by the influences of his Holy Spirit upon our souls.' This, I say, is the sum and substance of the Gospel: and though, doubtless, there are *depths*in it which no finite intelligence can fathom, yet is it so *plain*, that a very child may comprehend it. Hold this fast then; and, "for the knowledge of it, let all other things be accounted by you as dung and dross."

***~~2. The open profession of it—~~***

We may retain in our minds a regard for the truth, without exciting any uneasy feelings in those who are opposed to it. But, if we profess it openly, and stand forth as avowed servants of Christ, we shall be sure to make ourselves, even as Christ himself was, a butt of contradiction. No means will be left untried to repress our ardor: threatenings, entreaties, promises, expostulations, will all be used in their turn, to withdraw us from our purpose of confessing Christ before men, and of becoming his stated followers. But nothing should induce us to deny Christ, or to put our light under a bushel. Not even life itself should be dear to us, in comparison of the approbation of God and of our own conscience. We must "follow Christ outside the camp, bearing his reproach," and "rejoicing that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake." In a word, we must be steadfast in the faith, and "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering."

***~~3. The sweet experience of it in the soul—~~***

This is soon lost, and Satan will exert himself in all possible ways to rob us of it. Any *sin indulged*in the heart will "grieve the Spirit" of God, and provoke our God to "hide his face from us." Nor is it *open sin*only that will bring darkness upon the soul: *habitual negligence*will soon produce the very same effects. If we cultivate not our garden with unwearied assiduity, then weeds will grow up, and choke the seed that has been sown in it. If we would enjoy the light of God's countenance, we must "walk with God," as Enoch did; and "keep ourselves in the love of God," "holding fast our confidence, and the rejoicing of our hope firm unto the end."

This being our acknowledged duty, let me call your attention to,

***~~II. The consideration with which it is enforced—~~***

Much is spoken in Scripture respecting the future advent of our Lord. He will come at the last day, to judge the world in righteousness: and the prospect of that event may well operate on our minds, to keep us steadfast in every part of our duty. For when that shall take place,

***~~1. All opportunity of recovering the ground we have lost will be at an end—~~***

With respect to ourselves, it matters not whether we are alive at the coming of our Lord or not; for to every individual of mankind, the day of his death will be, in fact, the day of judgment: "there will be no repentance in the grave," on the contrary, "as the tree falls, so it will lie," "he who is holy, will be holy still; and he who is filthy, will be filthy still." We may be slumbering, like the foolish virgins; and dreaming of some future period, when we will arise to trim our lamps: but "when the Bridegroom comes, they alone who are watching will enter in with him to the wedding; and the door will then be shut;" and all will be excluded forever who waited not aright for the coming of their Lord. You all know how vain were the efforts of the foolish virgins to procure oil, when once the proper period for obtaining it was past: and so shall we find it, in the day that our Lord shall come, if we are unprepared to meet him. Let this thought stimulate us to watchfulness and zeal, that, "at whatever hour our Lord shall come, we may be found ready."

***~~2. Our real state, whatever it may be, will then be made known—~~***

We may appear, both to ourselves and others, to be in a far more favorable state than we really are. In truth, those very delusions which men embrace are often esteemed by them as evidences of superior piety. But the various books which will then be opened—

the book of *Scripture*,

the book of *conscience*,

the book of God's *remembrance*,

and the book of *life*—

will all bear testimony to our real state, and make us to appear in our true colors. If we have declined from the ways of God, whatever those declensions were, or from whatever cause they arose, they will all be noted, and "the Lord's judgment respecting us will be in all things according to truth." Should we not, then, be on our guard against every device, whether of men or devils, to draw us from our God? Yes, truly, we should "prove all things" with incessant care; and "hold fast," with invincible firmness, "that which is good."

***~~3. Our final sentence will then be irreversibly declared—~~***

The sheep and the goats will then be separated, each for their proper fold. The hypocrite will then have his portion assigned him, and the apostate his portion, according to the degree in which they have erred from the faith, and to the light against which they have sinned. Hence John not only exhorts the steadfast to "look to themselves, that they lose not the things that they have wrought, but that they receive a full reward;" but further gives to the wavering this solemn warning, "Hold fast what you have, that no man take your crown."

***~~Methinks this subject speaks powerfully,~~***

***~~1. To those in early life—~~***

Who, that reflects on the temptations to which the young are exposed, must not tremble for their state?

The *world*with all its snares,

the *flesh*with all its lusts,

the *devil*with all his devices;

who is able to withstand them all? Truly, if it were not that we have an Almighty Friend to uphold us, not one would ever endure to the end. O, cry mightily to God to "bear you up in his arms," and to "preserve you blameless unto his heavenly kingdom!"

***~~2. To the more advanced Christian—~~***

Even you have need to fear, lest, after all you have experienced, like David and like Solomon, you fall. But, methinks, it is no little comfort to you to reflect, that "the coming of your Lord draws near." Look for him then daily, having your loins girt and your lamp trimmed: so shall you behold his face with joy; and "your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord."

#2493

***~~Epistle to the Church in Thyatira, part 4~~***

***~~[Revelation 2:26–29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.26â29)~~***

He who overcomes, and keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the Churches.

NOW we come to the *encouragement*which our Lord gives his faithful people to maintain their integrity. To the steadfast and victorious he promises "the glory and honor and immortality which they seek for." The terms indeed, in which these promises are conveyed, are not easy to be understood; but, when understood, they are very cheering to the soul. I will, therefore,

***~~I. Explain the promises here given—~~***

The saints at Thyatira had been, as in truth they are in all times and places, subjected to persecution from their enemies: and here our Lord promises them,

***~~1. HONOR, when all others shall be abased—~~***

Now the enemies of Christ reign; and "his people are trodden under foot," but, before long, the state of things shall be reversed. Even in this world the time is coming when "the saints shall possess the kingdom," and when those who seek to oppress them shall be destroyed with a terrible destruction.

Until that period shall arrive, the saints are to bear and suffer all things: but, at the time of the Millennium, when there will be a formidable and almost universal combination against them, God has ordained, that they shall be his instruments to punish his enemies, just as they were when he sent them to extirpate the seven nations of Canaan.

As foreign as war and bloodshed are to the wishes and feelings of a Christian mind, there will be no more reluctance in the saints then to execute the commission given them, than there was in the angel to slay in one night all the Egyptian first-born, or one hundred and eighty-five thousand of the Assyrian army. Of that period the Psalmist speaks: "Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds: let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishment upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written. This honor have all his saints."

But this honor will they possess in a far higher degree in the day of judgment. For then will the Lord Jesus Christ "put all enemies under his feet," and execute vengeance on them; as God has said: "You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

In the whole of that transaction the saints will bear their part. They will sit with Christ, as his assessors in judgment; and will concur with him in all that he shall do; saying, "True and righteous are his judgments;" and to every one of them we say, "Amen, Amen, Hallelujah, Amen!" This is so unquestionable a truth, that Paul takes for granted that every saint must be well acquainted with it: "Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? Do you not know that we shall judge even angels?" Yes, brethren, then will be fulfilled that saying of the Psalmist, "Man, being in honor, abides not: he is like the beasts that perish. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning."

***~~2. GLORY, when all others shall be put to shame—~~***

Now, the ungodly shine forth with splendor; while the godly, if not immured in prisons, are put altogether in the back-ground, in a state of darkness and obscurity. But the time is coming when God will "give to his saints the morning star." The morning star rises with peculiar brilliancy a little before the sun, when all the other stars of Heaven fade away, and vanish from our sight. And so will it be with the saints in the day of judgment. When the fashion of this world shall have passed away as a passing scene or vision, then shall the saints "shine forth as the stars of the firmament forever and ever," then shall be seen upon them the bright radiance of the Savior's beams; and they shall, as it were, be his harbingers to proclaim his advent: yes, thus shall "they be exalted in glory;" while "the wicked," who once treated them with scorn and contempt, shall themselves "be silent in darkness."

Having *explained the promises*, I will now,

***~~II. Commend them to your most attentive consideration—~~***

Let your minds, my brethren, rise to the occasion. See, in these promises,

***~~1. What encouragement they afford to the followers of Christ—~~***

The Lord's people have, in this world, their cross to bear, and are destined to follow their Divine Master through much tribulation: but they are assured, that, "if they suffer with him, they shall also reign with him," and that not the meanest of their services shall be unrewarded."

Here I would particularly call your attention to the parallel which our Lord himself has drawn in our text: "To him will I give.… even as I have received of my Father." Yes, *everything which God the Father has given to his Son, as the reward of his services, he will give to us, so far as we are capable of receiving and enjoying it.*Has the Father given to him a throne and a kingdom? Such will Christ confer on us also. He himself says, "I give unto you a kingdom, as my Father has give unto me," and again; "To him who overcomes, will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and sit with my Father upon his throne." There is no part of "the glory which his Father has given him, which he will not, according to our capacity, give to us."

Shall not the prospect of it all operate on us, as it wrought on Christ himself, when, for the "joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, and despised the shame, until he sat down at last at the right hand of the throne of God?" I say, then, consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds.

***~~2. What a recompense they hold forth for our poor services—~~***

Methinks, if nothing more had been said, than that his faithful people should have all their guilt cancelled, and be delivered from the judgments which they have so richly merited, it would have been an ample recompense for all that we could either do or suffer for him in this life. Suppose that such a proposal were now made to one of the fallen angels, or to the rich man that is now lifting up his eyes in Hell torments; would he not gladly embrace the offer, and account all his future labors well repaid, even though nothing but annihilation awaited him when he had performed his task?

Let us look at our works, and see what they are: tell me if there is one for which you do not blush, on account of its defects? and whether, if they had been a thousand times more perfect, you would not still have accounted yourselves as "unprofitable servants?" But it is not in this way that God magnifies his grace. No,*he gives not in such scanty measure to his beloved children; nor does he so estimate their poor imperfect services*. He accounts not all the glory and felicity of Heaven too great for them. He makes them his very heirs, "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; that, having suffered with him, they may also be glorified together."

In truth, at the last day the saints shall all resemble Christ. It is said of him, that "he shall smite the nations, and rule them with a rod of iron; and tread the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." He, too, says of himself, "I am the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." And this is the *honor*, and this is the *glory*, which he has promised to confer on us!

As Joshua commanded the captains of his army to come and put their feet upon the necks of the vanquished kings, so will the Great Captain of our salvation make those who have fought under his banners to participate in the glory and felicity of his triumphs. Tell me, then, whether it does not become us to "keep his works" with all diligence; accounting "no commandment grievous;" nor hesitating, if called to it, to lay down our life for his sake? Let us keep them then, my brethren, yes, and keep them all, and "even to the end." Let us "never be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

I may further add, that "every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." No doubt there will be a difference in the rewards, as well as the punishments, of men in a future life: for "one star will differ from another star in glory." And this may well stimulate us to the utmost possible exertion in the service of our God. But to the least and lowest of the saints shall the recompense be inconceivably great: for the very lowest in glory "shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, forever and ever!"

#2494

***~~Epistle to the Church in Sardis, part 1~~***

***~~[Revelation 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.1)~~***

And unto the angel of the Church in Sardis write; These things says he who has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know your works, that you have a name that you live, and are dead.

IF we thought, as some do, that the epistles to the different Churches in Asia were descriptive of the state of the Church, in successive periods of time, to the end of the world—we would be ready to fix on this epistle, above all others, as characterizing the present time. There is much profession of religion in the world, and somewhat of the reality; but very many, who "have the *form*of godliness, are either wholly destitute of its power," or so inanimate as to excite suspicions that they are "dead."

Without intending to say that any such parallel was designed of God (for I conceive that all the epistles were merely descriptive of the several Churches at the time they were written), I yet feel no doubt, but that, so far as the circumstances of any particular Church at this day accord with those of any Asiatic Church, what is spoken to that Asiatic Church may well be applied to us at this time. I therefore avail myself of this to point out to you,

***~~I. The reproof given to the Church of Sardis—~~***

Our blessed Lord, in this, as in all the other epistles, assumes to himself such titles and attributes as are peculiarly suited to the subject-matter of the epistle itself. He was about to declare the real state of the Church at Sardis to be very different from that which was generally supposed: we therefore here find,

***~~1. His qualifications for exercising judgment—~~***

He has in himself all *the fullness of the Spirit*. This is intimated in that expression, "He has the seven Spirits of God." The number, seven, denotes both variety and perfection: and he has both for his own personal endowment and for the benefit of his people, the Holy Spirit in all his diversified powers and operations.

As Messiah, it was foretold of him, that "he should be anointed with the oil of joy and gladness above his fellows;" that is, above all, whether in earth or Heaven, who should partake of this divine unction. It was said, "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." So endowed, he was able to discern every motion of men's hearts: not the slightest "imagination of a thought" could escape his notice: "every spirit could be weighed by him" in a perfect balance; and his "judgment could not but be according to truth."

Hence it is expressly said of him, that "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." At the same time, "he holds the seven stars in his hand;" and observes whether they move with perfect regularity in their respective orbits, and reflect with unclouded splendor, for the benefit of the world, the light which they derive from him. He has formed them for his own glory; and he expects that they exist and move for no other end.

But, from the closest inspection of them, he gives this as,

***~~2. His testimony respecting that degenerate Church—~~***

"You have a name that you live, but you are dead." The Church of Sardis was held in repute by the other neighboring Churches to which the different epistles were written: but they were really in a very degenerate state; many of them being yet altogether "dead in trespasses and sins;" and those who had a spark of life within them, being so cold, as to be to all appearance "dead."

What were the precise points in which they failed, we are not informed. It does not appear that there was any flagrant violation of God's law among them, or any toleration of principles that were fundamentally erroneous; for then they would have been condemned on these accounts, as the other Churches had been: but, while they were externally blameless, he "found," and testified, that *their inward state was lamentably defective*. Of this he complained; and,

From his complaint, I will take occasion to show,

***~~II. How far it is applicable to the Christian Church at this day—~~***

***~~There is doubtless a great profession of religion at the present day—~~***

Religion, in some respects, has of late become, I had almost said, the fashion of the day. The leading doctrines of Christianity, such as our fall in Adam and our recovery by Christ, are so generally acknowledged now, that, if they were kept out of sight in the degree in which they were withheld from public notice through the seventeenth and the greater part of the eighteenth century, there would be a general complaint against those ministers who so treacherously withheld from men the bread of life. *Mere morality*would not satisfy men now, as it did through that unhappy period, when the extravagances of those who had professed a more than ordinary zeal for the Gospel had driven men to a contrary extreme, and led them almost to expel the Gospel from their public ministrations. A concern to propagate the Gospel has arisen of late, and pervaded all ranks and orders of men. Even kings upon their thrones have used their influence to send the light of divine truth to the remotest nations of the earth, where not a ray of it had ever shone before. Nobles have also lent their influence, and even personally stood forth to advocate the cause of Christ before men: and vast assemblies of persons, who could find no other common ground to stand upon, have met to advance the diffusion of divine knowledge, and to help forward, in every possible way, the salvation of the world. Societies have been formed by every class of Christians, for the furtherance of this good work; and even the poorest in the land have gladly contributed their aid, that, through the collective efforts of the Christian world, ignorance might be banished from the earth, and that the light of the Gospel might shine into the hearts of the most benighted heathen. In this view, it may well be said of the great mass of the Christian community, that "they have a name to live."

***~~But, though a profession of religion is general, the actual possession of it is rare—~~***

The greater part of these very persons, it is to be feared, while "they have a name to live, are dead." Many have patronized the spread of the Bible, and promoted the reading of it by others, who yet have never had it written in their own hearts. Many have advocated its leading truths, who have never experienced them in their own souls. Many have spoken well about repentance, and faith, and obedience, as to be inculcated on others—who have never wept for their own sins; never fled to Christ for refuge from the wrath of God; never yielded up themselves as living sacrifices to God, to be employed, and, if need be, to be consumed for him. Thousands have given liberally to God the pittance they could ill afford, who yet have never given to him their *hearts*, which alone is the gift that is acceptable to him. Yes, indeed, it is to be feared that the great mass of those who applaud themselves, and are applauded by others, as zealous for the truth, have never so much as had the first principles of the Gospel formed within them. They are still, in all other respects, the very same men that they were before they became thus active, and the same as other persons are who have never once concurred in any one of their benevolent pursuits.

Respecting some we may "hope better things." But even where there is some spiritual life, it is but a spark, which is scarcely seen under the embers by which it is obscured. The spiritual state of the generality is by no means such as the Christian life requires. *How little is there of real spirituality of mind, real delight in God, real devotedness of heart to his service!*Where the souls of men are in a right state, a divine savor diffuses itself all around them, and they shine as lights in a dark world. But, if you look at those who appear so zealous for the diffusion of the Gospel among others, how few do you find of this character! Truly the state of the Sardian Church is realized to an awful extent among us: insomuch, that it may well be said of *us*, as it was of them, "You have a name that you live, but are dead."

***~~Let me then, in conclusion, urge upon you two important duties,~~***

***~~1. Examine into the real state of your souls before God—~~***

Be not satisfied with good appearances, or with the good opinion which others have formed respecting you.*To what purpose will it be to "have a name to live, when the heart-searching God attests that you are dead?"*It is by his judgment, and not by that of men, that you will stand or fall: and therefore you must rest in no state which does not approve itself to the heart-searching God. "Examine, then, whether you are in the faith, and prove your own selves," for, "not he who commends himself will be approved, but he whom the Lord commends."

***~~2. Look to the Lord Jesus Christ for the effectual aid of his Spirit—~~***

The Lord Jesus has received the Holy Spirit, in order that he may give him; and in him is a sufficiency for all your necessities. You cannot conceive of any want that there is in you, but there is a corresponding fullness in him. Look, then, to Christ for the sevenfold gifts of his Spirit: so shall your future course be bright and regular, and God himself shall be glorified in your deportment.

#2495

***~~Epistle to the Church in Sardis, part 2~~***

**[Revelation 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.2)**

Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found your works perfect before God.

THESE words reflect the true light upon those which precede them. Our Lord did not intend to say that the Christians at Sardis were wholly destitute of life, but that they were in a state bordering upon it; none of their works approving them as perfect, either as to their number or their "intrinsic worth;" on the contrary, everything which they did was sadly defective, and the "things which remained in them were ready to die."

In the foregoing discourse, we traced somewhat of the resemblance which there is between the Church at Sardis and that which exists among us at this day. And in the counsel which our Lord gave to them we may undoubtedly find much that is applicable to ourselves. Let us, then, proceed to consider,

***~~I. The state here described—~~***

It is here acknowledged that they did some works, though not in a perfect way; and that there were some good things remaining in them, though they were in so feeble a state that they were ready to die. Now, that we may be able to form a correct estimate of our own state, I will endeavor to show, when the same kind of *declension*has taken place in us. We may discover it as having already taken place,

***~~1. When our graces languish—~~***

*The exercise of our graces is a sure test of the reality and degree of our spiritual life.* We may form a judgment by examining them.

Let us examine our FAITH.—The office of faith is, to realize invisible things: and when it is in vigorous exercise, "it is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Then earth and Heaven appear in their true colors; and the things of time and sense are lighter in our estimation than vanity itself, in comparison of those things which are invisible and eternal. Under the influence of this grace, both the promises and threatenings of God are regarded as no less certain than if they were already accomplished before our eyes; and the soul is stimulated by them to an active pursuit of its chief good. But let a man decline in his apprehension of invisible realities, how clearly will the effect be seen in his whole deportment! The truths of God's word, which were once so powerful, will lose their efficacy: the diligence which was once so constant and exemplary will be relaxed: and the man who was once so lively will become almost as one dead.

Let us examine also our HOPE.—As *faith*sees the reality, *hope*anticipates the enjoyment, of heavenly things: and when it is lively, it is an anchor of the soul, which keeps us steadfast in the midst of all the storms and tempests with which we can be assailed. But oftentimes hope is allowed to decline: and then the future prospects are less valued: and earthly things rise proportionably in importance. Then we are discouraged by any difficulties which we are called to contend with; and we lose our enjoyment of those things which formerly constituted our supreme felicity.

Let us further examine also our LOVE.—Love is as wings to a believing soul: it carries us forward with ardor and delight. So greatly does it expand our views of duty, that it makes us dissatisfied with all we do, and urges us to the utmost exertions of which we are capable. But *when love decays*, we lose all our fervor in holy exercises: duties become a task and a burden; and they are performed with less frequency and spirituality of mind. Then the hidings of God's face, which once would have filled us with the deepest distress, are endured without much concern; and, while we feel indifferent about his return to our souls, we lose all our solicitude to please and honor him.

Now, I ask, what can indicate the dying state of a soul, if such a decay of our graces do not? Can any one doubt, but that a person who has so degenerated from a life of real godliness is fallen into the very state of those at Sardis?

***~~2. When our corruptions increase—~~***

Graces and corruptions are as the scales of a balance: whichever preponderate, the other diminishes. If, then, the decay of our graces manifest a decline in the divine life, so does the growth of our corruptions. Let us examine, therefore, respecting these.

The growth of these, and the consequent decay of the divine life, is manifest, *when our besetting sin resumes its former ascendency*.

—The effect of grace is to mortify our besetting sin. But that sin is rarely, if ever, so extinguished, but it continues, more or less, to harass and defile the soul: and it is sure to return when once we begin to decline from the ways of God; and by that, as much as by anything, will our declension be discovered. It matters not what that besetting sin is, whether pride, or covetousness, or lust, or anger, or whatever else; if it regains its power over us, we may be sure that it goes ill with our souls.

The same decay is manifest, if the natural hardness and obduracy of our heart returns.

—Divine grace brings a tenderness of spirit, which shows itself very especially in a way of humiliation and contrition. On the other hand, *the effect of sin is to blind the eyes and harden the heart*. Now, if we find less sensibility in reference to sin, less aversion to commit it, or less compunction after the commission of it—if, I say, conscience is less active and powerful in the discharge of its office in relation to these things—there can be no doubt that at least a great spiritual torpor is come upon us, if we are not actually dead.

I add once more, that this decay is peculiarly manifest, if we are unwilling to be reclaimed.

—A heart duly impressed with heavenly things desires the light: it longs for every instruction, whereby it may correct what is amiss, and prosecute with more success its way heavenward. But if a person is so fallen as to feel averse to instruction; if he hates to be told of his faults, and take offence at his monitor for his fidelity; if he palliates and excuses his errors; if he turns from the light, and goes to company and worldly occupation in order to stifle his convictions and shake off his uneasiness; truly he is in a Sardian state indeed: for this is the worst symptom that a living soul can possibly experience.

Now then, brethren, if you have obtained any insight into the condition of your own souls, listen, I pray you, to

***~~II. Our Lord's counsel to persons in such a state—~~***

None can need advice for their bodies, more than such persons do for their souls. In the Lord's name, therefore, I say to you,

***~~1. Be watchful—~~***

Be watchful against *self-deception*.

—There are many things which may hide our condition from us. We may easily mistake our gifts for graces; and may ascribe to the special operation of the Spirit of God what is the result only of natural principles. There have been many amiable traits in the characters of heathens, which yet were widely different from the graces of the Spirit, and which consequently were no proofs that the persons exercising those virtues were children of God. We must therefore be peculiarly on our guard against this source of self-delusion.

We may also be less sensible of decay, because it has come *gradually*upon us. And the heart itself will suggest many plausible excuses, in order to hide from us our real state: but we must remember that, though we may deceive ourselves and others, we can not deceive God. And to this effect Paul cautions us; "Be not deceived: God is not mocked."

I must say, too, *Guard against the occasions of sin*.

A man of God must, as far as will consist with his duties in social life, flee from contagion, lest he be infected by the evils which prevail around him. Worldly business, worldly pleasure, worldly company, will, if not very carefully watched, draw the soul from God. Too unrestrained an use, even of lawful things, will dampen our ardor in our heavenly course. There is not anything of which we have not occasion to be jealous, lest it draw our souls from God, or interfere with our progress in the divine life.

Especially must we be on our guard against a neglect of secret duties, or formality in the performance of them. No wonder our spirituality decays, if we be inattentive to the frame of our souls, or unwatchful against the very first symptoms of declension.

***~~2. "Strengthen the things that remain"—~~***

Doubtless it is the Lord Jesus Christ alone who can impart to you the strength you need: for "He has the seven Spirits of God;" and from him must you derive such "supplies of his Spirit" as your daily necessities require. *All human endeavors without the Spirit will be in vain*. Yet must you exert yourselves to the uttermost, and "work out your salvation with fear and trembling." As bodily strength improves by exercise, so does the strength of the soul: and in proportion as you "stir up the gift of God that is in you," your graces of faith and hope and love will be increased. If with all diligence you labor to add grace to grace, you are assured that "you shall never fall, but so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

In order to stimulate your soul to such exertions, lay home upon your minds all the most forcible considerations which either your knowledge or experience can suggest. Think how painful it is to lose our spirituality of mind and our sense of the Divine presence. Consider how dishonorable it is to God, and how dangerous to our own souls. Supposing we are recovered from such a state, who can tell by what fearful chastisements the recovery may be effected? And who can tell, whether, instead of ever restoring us to his favor, God may not come in righteous indignation, to execute upon us his threatened vengeance, and exclude us forever, like the foolish and unwatchful virgins, from his presence? Supposing then, that, notwithstanding our declensions, there is some good thing remaining in us, let us "strengthen it" by every possible means, if perhaps our backslidings may ultimately be healed, and we may attain at last a preparation of heart to meet our God.

***~~Application—~~***

***~~1. Those who have no marks of life in them—~~***

If those who are in a declining state be in great danger because of their declensions—then what, think you, must be your danger, in whom not even "the root of the matter" can be found? You may say, perhaps, 'I make no pretentious to religion, and therefore cannot be chargeable with a departure from it.' But I answer, This very acknowledgment involves in it a greater measure of guilt, than one would suppose any human being capable of contracting. We may suppose a creature to rebel against his Creator: we may even suppose a sinner to trample under foot the blood of the Redeemer, and to live altogether as "without God in the world." But that any man should glory in such a state, and make the acknowledgment of it a ground of self-vindication, this does really surpass anything which we should imagine even Satan himself to be capable of committing.

To every one who so proclaims his own impiety, I must say, "Out of your own mouth God will judge you, you wicked servant." You have said to God, "Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of your ways!" He will say to you, "Depart from me, I never knew you, you worker of iniquity!" "Depart, accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Keep on then, if you will, and dream that no evil shall come upon you: but know, of a surety, that "your judgment lingers not, and your damnation slumbers not."

***~~2. Those who are "walking with God, as dear children"—~~***

We are told of "some at Sardis that had not defiled their garments," and, I trust, there are some of that blessed character among you. But, when I consider how awfully the great mass of the Sardian Church declined from God, I cannot but be "jealous over you with a godly jealousy, lest Satan by any means prevail" to impede your progress in the divine life. I would have you, even to your last hour, to guard against pride and self-confidence, and to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling."

When you are weak, then it is that you are really strong." If you would be perfect, you must look to the Savior to "perfect that which concerns you." You must go on in a simple dependence on his power and grace; and commit yourselves to Him, of whom it is said, "He is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy—to whom be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever! Amen."

#2496

***~~Epistle to the Church in Sardis, part 3~~***

***~~[Revelation 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.3)~~***

Remember therefore what you have received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore you shall not watch, I will come on you as a thief, and you shall not know what hour I will come upon you.

IN the Church of God, there must, of necessity, be a great diversity of characters: and the office of a minister is to make a just discrimination between them, and, like a steward in a great family, to give to every one of them his portion in due season. But *to divide rightly the word of truth is no easy matter: it requires much knowledge, much discernment, and much fidelity*. The pattern to be followed, is that which is set before us in the epistles to the seven Churches of Asia. In this epistle to the Church of Sardis, one-half is occupied with reproof. In the two preceding verses we have been led to assume the same tone as is there adopted: and we are constrained to continue it in the present discourse; wherein I shall have occasion to notice,

***~~I. The state of a soul that is backslidden from God—~~***

We shall confine our observations to the point especially referred to in our text; namely, the state of the soul in reference to divine ordinances.

***~~A soul truly alive to God finds great delight in divine ordinances—~~***

They are regarded as God's appointed means of conferring his benefits upon the soul. The word is heard, not as the word of man, but as the word of God himself, speaking individually to the person's own soul. "It is received with meekness as an engrafted word, able to save the soul." The person, before he goes up to the house of God, implores the presence of God there; and begs that the word may not only be suited to his necessities, but may "come to him in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." While he is hearing the word, he begs of God so to *apply*it to him, that it may prove "the power of God to his everlasting salvation." *After he has heard the word, he endeavors to harrow it in, and water it, with meditation and prayer; and implores help from God, that he may be enabled to carry into effect every lesson he has received.*

***~~But to one who is in a backslidden state, the ordinances have lost a great measure of their interest—~~***

They are still attended, lest his declension should be made evident to common observation: but there is not that *delight*in them which was once experienced, nor that *earnest expectation*of good from them. The truths that are delivered fall upon a hard and rocky heart, from which Satan easily removes from them, even as birds catch up the seed that falls by the way-side. The word is heard either with *critical fastidiousness*or *with cold indifference*; and produces neither self-abasement on account of sin, nor elevation of soul on account of the mercy that is there revealed. It is possible that such persons may yet take some pleasure in the ministration of the word, on account of the eloquence of him by whom it is dispensed: but while, with Ezekiel's hearers, "they listen as to one who plays well upon an instrument," like them they are proof against every admonition which is delivered. Even the strongest declarations of divine truth fail to make any lasting impression on their minds, or to effect any abiding change within them.

Attend then, I pray you, while I declare to you,

***~~II. The duty of one who is in such a state—~~***

***~~1. "Remember" whence you are fallen—~~***

Look back, and see how great a change has taken place upon you. Call to mind the delight you once felt in divine ordinances, and the benefit you derived from them; and compare with those seasons your present coldness and insensibility. What reason can you assign for this melancholy change? Are not the truths as important as ever? and ought they not to be equally influential on your souls?

***~~2. "Hold fast" every good impression on your minds—~~***

The truths you received are yet abiding with you: let them, then, be retained with care and steadfastness: for, if you let them go, you have no other anchor for your souls, no other refuge from the wrath of God. I would fondly hope, too, that there are yet within you some good desires, some holy purposes and resolutions. I charge you then, "Hold them also fast," and beg of God, that, through the influence of his Holy Spirit, you may be enabled to carry them into full effect—

***~~3. "Repent" also of these shameful, these dangerous declensions—~~***

Think not that gross outward transgressions alone call for penitence: *the inward frame of a man's soul is as hateful to God in those who profess godliness, as the more flagrant acts of wickedness are in one who makes no profession*. Think of the *ingratitude*which such a declension betrays: Is it for this that God has quickened you from the dead, and revealed his Son in you, and given you such an experience of his power and grace? Is this the *return*which he has a right to expect? Think, too, of the *folly*of such a conduct. Do you hope for the pardon of your sins, and peace with God, and glory in a better world? and are you wise in casting it all away, or in endangering the loss of it by departing from God?

I tell you, that the deepest penitence befits you. Yes, "be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness; and humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, if perhaps, in the multitude of his tender mercies, he may lift you up."

And, that you may comply with these exhortations, consider,

***~~III. The extreme urgency of this duty—~~***

Your Lord threatens to "come upon you as a thief in the night," to visit upon you your inexcusable neglect.

***~~This you have but too great reason to expect—~~***

Many in your state comfort themselves with the hope that God will not proceed against them; but that in consideration of what he has already done for their souls, he will, by some special act of his grace, restore them to his favor. They will say, "Where God has begun a good work, he will carry it on, and perfect it until the day of Christ," and "whoever he loves, he will love unto the end."

But will any man take occasion, from such passages as these, to comfort himself while at a distance from God, and to delay his return to God? Will any man "continue thus in sin that grace may abound?" A more damning sin than this it is scarcely possible for him to commit.

Brethren, if there is one among you disposed to abuse in this manner the grace of the Gospel, let him know that he is as near to Hell as a man can well be, and that it will be a miracle of mercy if he is not in Hell before the light of another day: for our Lord's express declaration is, that "He will come upon him as a thief in the night, and not let him know what hour he will come upon him."

This is agreeable to what all the inspired writers have taught. Hear the Prophet Hosea: "Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me." "Israel has cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him." Hear our blessed Lord: "Watch; for you know not what hour your Lord does come. But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have allowed his house to be broken up. Therefore be also ready; for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of man comes. And if he find any servant unwatchful, the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

To the same effect speaks Paul also. And in the epistles before us the same *threatening*is used again and again. Know, therefore, and be assured, that in perverting the truths of Scripture you do but aggravate and ensure your eternal condemnation.

***~~Awake then, brethren, to your duty, before it is too late—~~***

To have "a *form*of godliness, while you are destitute of its power," is only to deceive your own souls. Look back, and see how you received the word at first; and get back to that childlike spirit which you then manifested. Your *brokenness of heart*should be increased rather than diminished; and your *tenderness of conscience*should be found in full activity. To turn back from these holy ways is to "turn back unto perdition." May God Almighty spare you yet a little longer, until you have recovered from your declension, and are returned to Christ as the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls! Let this be well settled in your minds, that the only way to ensure the not being taken unprepared, is to watch for the coming of your Lord, with loins ever girt, and your lamp ever trimmed!

***~~Application—~~***

***~~1. Those who are so far backslidden as to be insensible to their state—~~***

This, alas! is no uncommon state, for *the necessary effect of sin is to grieve the Spirit of God, and to harden the heart of man*. But if God should not cut you off suddenly, though it is greatly to be feared that he will, tell me what you will think of your present state, when you shall be lying on your bed, in the near approach of death and judgment? Let me tell you, that *every hour you neglect to turn unto your God, you are filling your dying pillow with thorns, and, alas! are "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath!"*

God has indeed said, that "the backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways," and this may be your unhappy state, in a dying hour: you may be then cherishing the same delusions which you harbor now, and be even more hardened than you are at the present moment. But at the bar of judgment, if not before, you will surely know, "that it is an evil and bitter thing to depart from God!"

***~~2. Those who are ashamed and confounded on account of their declensions—~~***

To you I would speak in a way of *encouragement*. God himself, as it were, feels for you, and is averse to execute upon you the judgments you deserve. Hear how he speaks concerning you: "My people are bent to backsliding from me. Though they called them unto the Most High, none at all would exalt him. How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you up, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together: I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger."

Nor is Jehovah merely thus tenderly concerned for you: he bids you return to him; and puts into your mouth words for that very purpose, even words to which he will return an answer of peace: "Take with you words, and turn unto the Lord. Say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips." Then he adds, "I will heal their backslidings, and love them freely: for my anger is turned away from him."

The same gracious overtures he makes through the Prophet Jeremiah; and the whole of his dealings with his people fully attest his readiness to fulfill these promises in their utmost extent. Then continue not at a distance from him; but avail yourselves of his gracious invitations; so, at whatever hour he shall come, you shall be found ready, and "enter forever into the joy of your Lord!"

#2497

***~~Epistle to the Church in Sardis, part 4~~***

***~~[Revelation 3:4–6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.4â6)~~***

You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. He who *overcomes*, the same shall be clothed in white clothing; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the Churches.

IN all the preceding part of this epistle, we have been necessitated to dwell almost exclusively on matters calling for *reproof*. It is with pleasure that we now turn to a subject of *commendation*. There were, even in the degenerate Church at Sardis, some who walked worthy of their heavenly calling, and were therefore honored with peculiar marks of the Divine favor. We shall find it profitable to consider,

***~~I. Their conduct—~~***

Under two distinct images this is set forth. We notice,

***~~1. Their walk—~~***

"They kept their garments undefiled," in the midst of an ensnaring and polluted world. It was no little honor to them, to receive from the heart-searching God such a testimony as this. *The world, in all its parts, has a tendency to defile the soul. Its maxims and habits are all contrary to the mind of God. All its votaries carry with them a contagion which spreads itself with fatal effect wherever they come.*Now, to walk in the midst of such a world is dangerous in the extreme; and few can do it without contracting much defilement to their souls. But there were "a few in Sardis" who did so. Though *in*the world, they were not *of*the world; but, notwithstanding the fellowship which from time to time they had maintained with the world, they had been "delivered from the evil of it." They had not been drawn aside by "the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eye, or the pride of life;" but had "walked holily, and justly, and unblamably, in the whole tenor of their conduct."

We are not to suppose that they were so perfect, that never a spot of sin was contracted by them; for "in many things we all offend;" and "there is not a just man on earth that lives and sins not," but in the habit, both of their minds and lives, they were "blameless and harmless, as sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, shining among them as lights in the world."

***~~2. Their victory—~~***

In process of time "they overcame;" as indeed all true believers shall eventually do, if only they "walk with God," and "keep themselves unspotted from the world." They cannot hope to differ so widely from all the maxims and habits of the world, and yet experience no opposition from those whom they so condemn. "If they will live godly in Christ Jesus, they must suffer persecution." But they were alike superior to the *terrors*and the *allurements*of the world; being neither deterred from duty by the one, nor allured to any evil by the other. They fought manfully against all the enemies of their salvation; and never ceased to fight, until all their enemies, and "Satan himself at their head, were bruised under their feet."

True, they were but few in number; but they were not discouraged by this: they would "not follow a multitude to do evil." It was no question with them, whether others acted agreeably to God's commands: the only question was, What has God required? and, having once ascertained that, they could not be prevailed upon, by any consideration whatever, to decline the path of duty, or to violate any obligation that lay upon them. They knew it to be their duty to "shine as lights in the world;" and they endeavored "so to make their light shine, that all who beheld them should be constrained to glorify their Father who in Heaven."

In exact accordance with their conduct is,

***~~II. Their reward—~~***

The coincidence between their conduct and the reward assigned them is remarkable: they had so walked as to "keep their garments clean," and to honor their Lord before men; and they shall henceforth "walk with their Lord in white," and "be honored by him in the presence of his Father and his holy angels."

Here, you will observe, are promised to them,

***~~1. The full fruition of all the objects they sought—~~***

They were, as indeed all true believers are, "a holy priesthood" to the Lord. To him they offered the sacrifices of prayer and praise continually; yes, they yielded up themselves as living sacrifices to the Lord. For God also they maintained a contest against the world and the flesh and the devil; and they approved themselves in all things as "good soldiers of Jesus Christ."

Now, the *priests*were clad in white; as was even the high-priest himself, when he went within the veil. And *conquerors*, too, when they went in triumphant procession, were also robed in white.

Now, says our blessed Lord, you, in both capacities, shall have your wishes fully accomplished; for in every respect you are worthy of the honor which I am about to confer upon you. In both the foregoing respects I have preceded you: I offered myself a sacrifice to God; and am now within the veil, enjoying the nearest possible access to him. I also fought and overcame, and am enjoying all the fruits of victory at the right hand of God. To me therefore shall you who have followed me in these respects, be forever assimilated, and with me shall be partakers of all my blessedness! With me you walked in this world: with me shall you walk in the world above. With me you walked so warily as to keep your garments undefiled: and with me shall you walk in white forever, beyond the possibility of ever contracting defilement; having a far nearer access to God than ever you could attain on earth; and crowned with glory, far beyond all that in your earthly state it was possible for you to enjoy. I regard you as "worthy" of this honor; not indeed on account of any *merit*that there was even in your best services, but as possessing a *fitness*for it. Your whole life was a state of preparation for this honor; and I proclaim you both fit for it, and worthy of it.

***~~2. The public approbation of the Lord whom they served—~~***

For the Lord's sake they had given up their names to reproach, so that their enemies, and even their friends and relatives, had been ready to blot out their names from any book where they might be had in remembrance. To such a degree had they been despised, that "they were counted as the very filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things." To these things had they meekly submitted, even to their dying hour, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for their Lord's sake."

In return for these services, the Lord promises them, "I will not blot out your names from the book of life. On the contrary, I will confess your names before my Father and His holy angels;" I will proclaim you as faithful servants; I will acknowledge you as beloved friends; I will honor you in the presence of the whole assembled universe, as partakers of my throne, and as heirs of my glory! Your work shall be seen in your reward; and your reward shall bear proportion to your work.

***~~And now "let him that has an ear, hear what the Spirit says unto the Churches." Hear,~~***

***~~1. You who complain of piety as needless preciseness—~~***

Suppose you saw a man clothed in white garments, and walking in the midst of dirty and crowded streets; and were told that the man's *life*depended on his keeping his garments clean from the morning even unto night: would you wonder that he was circumspect, and on his guard against coming in contact with that which would defile him? Would you wonder that he endeavored so to take every step, that he might ultimately attain his end, and approve himself to the person that would inspect his garments at the close of the day?

What then do you mean by condemning the Christian for his holy walk, and by deriding it as *needless preciseness?*That it differs from those around him, I grant: and I think you will clearly see, how much the walk of these favored "few at Sardis" must have differed from that of those, who "had a name to live, but were dead." I tell you, brethren, it must be so: and every one of you, who will be approved of the Lord in the last day, must "have the mind which was in Christ Jesus," and "walk even as he walked."

***~~2. You who dare to be singular in an ungodly world—~~***

Amidst the Church of Sardis there were "a few," and only a few, who walked acceptably to God. But was this their fault? All the others should have resembled them: and if they would not, it was to the honor of that little band that they dared to be singular.

Let me not be misunderstood. I am not recommending singularity in matters of indifference: no, such *affectation*I greatly disapprove: but, in things which are of importance to the welfare of the soul, we should know no *example*but that of Christ and his Apostles, nor any *rule*but the written word of God: and if others will not walk with us in this way, and agreeably to this rule, we must say, with Joshua, "Whatever the whole world may do—as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Go on, brethren, even though you be like Noah in the antediluvian world, or like Lot in Sodom. If others are careless of their walk, "you must keep your garments clean." And if others are offended at your singularity, and "cast out your name as evil on account of it," let it suffice to know, that "your names are written in Heaven;" and that, when your adversaries shall be disclaimed by God as unworthy of the least mercy—you shall be approved, as worthy of all the honor and blessedness that your God and Savior can confer upon you!

#2498

***~~Epistle to the Church in Philadelphia, part 1~~***

***~~[Revelation 3:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.7), [8a](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Revelation 3.8a)~~***

To the angel of the Church in Philadelphia write; These things says he who is holy, he who is true, he who has the key of David, he who opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens; I know your works.

THOSE who imagine that the letters to the seven Churches refer, in a prophetic way, to different periods of the Church, consider this as descriptive of the Millennial age. It is true, there is in this epistle nothing brought forward as matter of reprehension; nor is there any threatening contained in it; but it is very far from answering to that elevation of piety which the whole Scriptures teach us to expect in that day.

The particulars addressed to this Church will be considered in our next discourse: at present, we confine our attention to the *introductory*part of it; in which, as in all the other epistles, we notice the description which our blessed Lord gives of his own character. The *attributes*ascribed to him are,

***~~I. Essential, and personal—~~***

He is here spoken of as "He who is *holy*, and He who is *true*." Now, as man, he answered to this character: for he gave to his bitterest enemies this challenge, "Which of you convinces me of sin." And when they had sought by all possible means to find a flaw in him, they were constrained to acknowledge that "they could find in him no fault at all." And, so far as *truth*is concerned, no person was able to controvert or contradict one word he ever spoke: he was in all things, and on all occasions, "the True and Faithful Witness." But He is not merely holy and true, as all his servants are: no, he is *the Holy One, who is truth itself*, even "God over all," essentially and immutably possessing these attributes in all their fullness. He may, in a sense inapplicable to any created being, be designated,

***~~"He who is HOLY"—~~***

Holiness is an essential attribute of the Deity. The angels around his throne celebrate this perfection, saying, "Holy, Holy Holy, is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." Indeed, in a more especial manner is this attribute acknowledged; since, in a peculiar and pre-eminent degree, he is distinguished by it: "Who is like unto you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like unto you, *glorious in holiness?*" The very name, "The Holy One," and, "The Holy One of Israel," is that by which Jehovah is most commonly designated. And it is so identified with Deity, as to be incommunicable to any creature whatever: "Thus says the Lord your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord your God."

Yet is this the name by which Christ, the great Bridegroom of the Church is called: "Your Maker is your Husband; the Lord Almighty is his name; and your Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called." To him is this name expressly applied, both in citations from the Old Testament, and in direct affirmations by the inspired Apostles. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, declares, that in the resurrection of Jesus that Scripture was fulfilled, "You will not leave my soul in Hell, neither will you suffer *your Holy One*to see corruption." And in his very next address to the Jews, he charges home upon them their sin in these words: "You denied *the Holy One*and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of Life." It is remarkable, that even the devils were constrained to acknowledge Jesus under this character: "Are you come to destroy us? I know you, who you are, *the Holy One*of God."

To him, in like manner, may be applied the name,

***~~"He who is TRUE"—~~***

Truth is also an attribute of the Deity. Moses says of him, "A God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is He." He is the "God who cannot lie." So of Jesus is this same perfection predicated, as constituting an essential and immutable part of his character: "God has 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."

It must be remembered, that in several parts of the description given of Jesus in these different epistles, his Divine character is particularly marked. "He who was dead, and is alive again," is expressly called, "The First and the Last;" which cannot possibly be applied to any but the one true God. We therefore recognize in the characters assigned to Him in my text, not only his *pre-eminence as man*, but his *essential character as God*.

We now proceed to notice the Lord Jesus in that part of his character which is,

***~~II. Ministerial and official—~~***

What is said of his "having the key of David" will be best understood by referring to that passage in the prophecies of Isaiah from whence the words are taken. Shebna had been "treasurer over the king's house," under Ahaz and Hezekiah: but, for his pride and carnal security, God determined to cast him out, even as a ball is cast out from a sling; and to substitute, in his place, Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, to whom should henceforth be given the key of the house of David, so that he should manage everything with uncontrolled authority, opening where no man should shut, and shutting where no man should open." The *key*that was put upon his shoulder was an emblem of his *authority*: and in the whole of this office he was a type of Jesus Christ, who, in his mediatorial capacity, was elevated to the throne of David, and *invested with all power to govern his people agreeably to his sovereign will*. This power he exercises,

***~~1. Over the WORLD—~~***

Seated at the right hand of God, "he does according to his will, in the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; nor can any stay his hand, or say unto him, What are you doing?" So unlimited is his government, that "not so much as a sparrow falls to the ground" without his special permission.

***~~2. Over the CHURCH—~~***

This is his more special charge. He is constituted "Head over all things to the Church," that he may order everything for its edification and advancement. To his servants, who go forth to preach his Gospel, he "opens a great and effectual door" which none can shut, or interposes his prohibition, as seems good in his sight.

To his providential care it must be ascribed, that the Church has stood its ground amidst the most inveterate enemies, and been kept alive as a spark in the midst of a tempestuous ocean. He said that "the gates of Hell should never prevail against his Church;" and he has fulfilled his word, even to the present hour. The most powerful nations have been brought to nothing, but of his Church and kingdom there shall be no end.

***~~3. Over EVERY INDIVIDUAL in the Church—~~***

It is particularly said of Eliakim, that "he should be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah," and this office does Jesus execute towards every one of his people. It is not possible to adequately express either Christ's affection for His redeemed people, or His care over them. Suffice it to say, that "not so much as a hair is allowed to fall from the head of any one of them," except as He is pleased to permit.

Conceive of a steward, at the head of a large family; how anxious will he be to provide for every member of that family his portion in due season! *So shall the least and lowest of the saints be supplied out of the fullness that is in Christ Jesus, and be furnished with everything that he stands in need of, for body and for soul, for time and for eternity*. With uncontrollable sovereignty will he appoint to all, as he sees fit. At the same time everything is ordered by him with unerring wisdom and incessant care; nor against any one of his appointments shall all the powers of darkness prevail. His power is irresistible; and in every case, without exception, "his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his will."

This is the power committed to him from above; and, as long as there shall continue any scope for the exercise of his mediatorial office, he will exercise it for the good of his Church and people. But, when the end shall be fully come, then will he deliver up this kingdom to the Father's hands, and "God shall be all in all."

***~~See then,~~***

***~~1. To whom we are to approve ourselves—~~***

It is not man's judgment that we should regard; but the judgment of Him whose holiness will try our most secret thoughts, and whose truth will assign to every one his portion in perfect conformity with the written word. As for man, he, be his judgment what it may, can neither open Heaven, nor shut it: but Jesus has "the keys of Hell and of death," and, if he opens Heaven to those who are waiting for him, none shall shut it against them: nor, if he shuts Heaven against the unwatchful, shall all the entreaties that can ever be urged prevail to gain them admission.

I charge you then, brethren, to remember that admonition which he gives to all his Churches without exception; "I know your works!" for, most assuredly, according to what *he*sees and knows, respecting every one of us, will his sentence of admission or exclusion be. Then, at all events, whatever his present forbearance may lead us to imagine, "will he judge with righteousness, and reprove with equity; and righteousness will be the belt of his loins, and faithfulness the belt of his heart."

***~~2. On whom, in all things, we are to depend—~~***

To Christ alone are we to look, both as our Advocate and our Head. He has all fullness committed to him on purpose for us; and we are to receive out of that fullness, according to our needs. Of Eliakim it is said, "They shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all the vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups even to all the vessels of flagons." And this shows on whom we are to rely, even every one of us, from the least to the greatest. All of us must "live" by faith in him, even "by faith in the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us." Let us but look to him, and we have nothing to fear: for he is able to supply our every need, "that we, having always all-sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work," and "have an abundant entrance ministered unto us into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

#2499

***~~Epistle to the Church in Philadelphia, part 2~~***

**[Revelation 3:8–11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.8â11)**

I know your works: behold, I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it: for you have a little strength, and have kept my word, and have not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. Because you have kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which you have, that no man take your crown.

IN this Church, as in that at Smyrna, the Lord saw nothing to condemn: and therefore, in the epistle written to them, there is not a word either of reproof or threatening. It is true, that the commendations bestowed on them are not so copious and energetic as those in which some others Churches were addressed: but it is no little praise to them, that nothing was found among them deserving of reproof.

Such a *mediocrity of character*is by no means displeasing in the sight of God. For, granting that a man's piety is not so exalted in some respects as that of others, yet, if it is without that unhappy alloy which in many cases debases and degrades the profession of more distinguished Christians, it is more acceptable to God on the whole.

We read of some who were "as a cake not turned;" burnt up, as it were, on one side, while they are altogether doughy on the other. In contradistinction to such characters, they more approve themselves as "sons of God, who are blameless and harmless, and without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation."

The words which I have read contain the entire address of our Lord to the Church of Philadelphia; with the exception of the concluding promise to those who shall finally overcome in the Christian warfare; which promise forms the close of every epistle. That I may bring it before you in one entire view, and render it as useful as I can, I will consider,

***~~I. The peculiar subjects here addressed to them—~~***

The subjects will all appear in their order, if we mark,

***~~1. The TESTIMONY borne—~~***

Our blessed Lord had "set before that Church an open door" for the ministration of the Gospel and the enjoyment of its blessings; and, by his special providence, had taken care that "no man should shut it." Great opposition, indeed, had been made to them, and the most violent persecution had raged against them: but they "had kept the word of Christ," even "the word of his patience;" which is so called, because no man ever embraces it aright without having abundant occasion for patience, while he holds it fast, and endeavors to adorn it by a suitable conduct. The trials they had endured in consequence of adhering to that word had been exceedingly heavy. Yet, notwithstanding they possessed but little strength, they had approved themselves faithful to their Lord, and could in no instance be prevailed upon to "deny his name."

Now, this was an honorable testimony; and the more so, because "their strength was small." If their talents were few, they endeavored to employ them to the honor of their Lord: and they thereby performed towards him a good and acceptable service.

***~~2. The PROMISE given—~~***

This was suited to the occasion. There were coming upon the Church trials far more severe than any they had yet endured. The persecution under the Emperor Trajan seems to be that which is here more particularly referred to: for that was of fourteen years duration, and destroyed many thousands of Christians throughout all the Roman Empire. God permitted these persecutions to arise, "for the trying of his people," and the making of a visible distinction between those who were upright and those who were dissemblers with God.

Now, to these persecutions the Church of Philadelphia would have been exposed in as great a degree as others, if God had not, in part, averted the storm: but He, in mercy to his faithful people, and as a recompense to their fidelity, screened them in some measure from the violence of the tempest, and, by the mighty working of his power, enabled them to sustain whatever portion of it was permitted to fall upon them: thus fulfilling to them that precious promise, "God is faithful; who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it."

But he further assured them, for their comfort, that those Judaizing teachers who boasted of their eminence as Christians, while they were in fact no Christians at all, but "of the synagogue of Satan;" that they, I say, who were their most inveterate enemies, "should come and worship at their feet," and "confess that these very persons whom they had persecuted were indeed the favorites of their God." Such cases had often occurred, in the history of the Lord's people; and such should occur to them.

In what way, and to what extent, this was fulfilled to them, we are not informed: but there can be no doubt, but that, in many instances, their piety was instrumental to the conviction of their enemies, and, in many instances too, to their conversion: so that what had been fulfilled in the Centurion at our Lord's death, and in the Jailor at Philippi, was, to a very great extent, realized in them; agreeably to that prophetic declaration, "The sons of them that afflicted you shall come bending unto you, and all they that despised you shall bow down themselves at the soles of your feet: and they shall call you, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel."

***~~3. The CAUTION administered—~~***

Blameless as they were, and hitherto victorious, yes, and protected by the special providence of their God, yet did they need to be stirred up to holy vigilance, and to persevering exertion in the divine life. Thus far they were entitled to a crown of life: but still they were on the field of battle, and must not indulge carnal security or remissness, "lest their crown should, after all, be lost." True, the time for their sufferings and their labors was but short, because their "Lord was coming quickly," to terminate the one, and to reward the other. But still, until he would come, and dismiss them from their warfare, they must "hold fast" every *principle*they had received, and every *practice*they had maintained: for on their steadfastness, in fact, depended the final possession of their crown. If they "turned back, it would be unto perdition;" and "if they were again overcome by the world which they had vanquished, their last end would be worse than their beginning." It was only "by being faithful unto death, that they could finally secure the crown of life."

Having thus brought into view the substance of our Lord's address to this highly-favored Church, and opened the subjects contained in it, I proceed to point out,

***~~II. The IMPROVEMENT which we should make of them, for our benefit at this time—~~***

Truly, in these subjects, we may find much,

***~~1. To encourage the WEAK—~~***

Many are discouraged because "they have but *little*strength." But what a mercy is it to possess *any*strength at all! The great mass of mankind are led captive by their spiritual enemies, yes, "are led captive by the devil at his will." Surely, then, to have strength for the combat, even though it be but little, is a blessing for which we never can be sufficiently thankful.

Be it so, "our enemies live and are mighty," but still, "He who dwells on high is mightier;" and his strength, if only we trust in him, "shall be made perfect in our weakness." It would seem that our God and *Savior takes peculiar care to impress on our minds a sense of our weakness, on purpose that we may be led the more simply and implicitly to trust in him*.

What is weaker than a *sheep*in the midst of devouring wolves and lions? yet, says our blessed Lord, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

We cannot conceive of anything more disproportionate than the power of a *worm*to effect any extensive change upon a mountain: yet says God to his people, "Fear not, worm Jacob: for you shall thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff, fanning them with irresistible power, and scattering them as a whirlwind."

Who, then has any reason to despond or be discouraged on account of either the power of his enemies, or the smallness of his own strength? Only see what God enabled the Philadelphian Christians, notwithstanding their weakness, to effect; and the very least among you may find reason to "glory rather in your infirmities, because, when you are weak, then are you really strong."

Not but that we should desire to grow "from babes to young men, and from young men to fathers;" but in a sense of our extreme weakness we never can exceed. To our last hour we must be "strong only in the Lord, and in the power of his might;" and, if we are "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," then shall "we be able to do all things through the strength that we derive from Him," and shall "be more than conquerors through Him who loves us."

***~~2. To establish the WAVERING—~~***

Who is there that has not been tempted, on some occasions, to a dereliction of his duty? If the Christians of the Philadelphian Church, blameless as they were, and steadfast as they had been in such violent persecutions, yet needed that solemn admonition, "Hold fast what you have, that no man take your crown," then surely we, who have been so often drawn aside by the allurements of the world, and the corruptions of our hearts, and the devices of our great enemy—need to have it impressed deeply on our minds.

Now, let me suppose one of you to be going into worldly company and worldly pleasures, or to be plunging yourselves unnecessarily into worldly cares; and to be at the same time, as must necessarily be the case, declining in spirituality of mind, and in heavenly zeal; what shall I say to you? What?*O think what you have at stake, and are likely to lose—a crown! a kingdom!*

Again, if there be one of you that is yielding to the fear of man, or "putting his light under a bushel" for fear of its offending some friend, some patron, or some enemy; What shall I say to you also, but this? *Think what you have at stake—a crown! a kingdom!*Who, in his senses, would risk the loss of this, for anything that this world could give or take away?

*I pray you, contemplate the glory and felicity of Heaven: yes, and take into the account, also, the sad alternative—the shame and misery of Hell. Will you expose yourselves to the loss of the one, and the consequent endurance of the other, for any transient pleasure, or to avoid any momentary pain?*O beg of God, I pray you, that you may not "fall from your own steadfastness," and "make shipwreck of your faith."

What does *Demas*now think of his apostasy? And what will *you*think, in a little time, of all which appears now so fascinating to your minds? I charge you, brethren, before God, yield not to the tempter; but "be steadfast, immoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as you know that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord."

***~~3. To humble the SELF-CONFIDENT—~~***

What would those, of whom our Lord speaks in my text, who "said they were Jews, the real people of the Lord, while they were not, but lied, and were in reality of the synagogue of Satan;" what, I say, would they have replied to the accusation in my text? Methinks, there would have been no bounds to their indignation. But it was true, notwithstanding. And it is true, also, of many at this day.

A proud skeptic or infidel will call himself a Christian—but "he lies." A conceited and contentious heretic, who has no zeal but for some notions of his own, with which he labors to divide the Church of Christ, may call himself a Christian—but "he also lies." To come nearer home, the man who, like the Judaizing Christians, hates the simple doctrine of salvation by faith, and, from a pretended zeal for good works, blends the law with the Gospel as a joint ground of his hope, he, I say, will account himself a Christian of the highest caste and character—but "he lies;" for "he is a perverter of the Gospel," and is, in reality, "of the synagogue of Satan," and, if he were an angel from Heaven, I must say of him, as Paul does, "Let him be accursed!"

Now, I am aware that this seems harsh, but what is to be done? It is not I who speak these things, but the Lord: and I dare not keep back his word. I must, at the peril of my own soul, "declare his whole counsel." *Whoever then you are, that profess yourself a Christian, while you are essentially defective either in the principles or tempers of Christianity, I must warn you against your delusions, and tell you that you deceive your own soul.*O that God would humble you, before it is too late; and make you to see, that none but the broken and contrite in heart can ever find favor in his sight!

The poor believer, who trembles at his word, and looks to Christ alone for salvation, is "the only person that is beloved of his God."

Come then, and seek salvation in His way: seek it simply and entirely by faith in Christ: then shall you also find acceptance with God, and be made "partakers of the felicity of his chosen ones." But, if you will persist in your enmity to God, and his Christ, and his people, know, that you shall have your portion with him "of whose synagogue you are," for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. To the impenitent and unbelieving "there remains nothing but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation to consume them." May the Lord avert from you that fate, for Christ's sake!

#2500

***~~Epistle to the Church in Philadelphia, part 3~~***

***~~[Revelation 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.12), [13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Revelation 3.13)~~***

Him who overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall no more go out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which comes down out of Heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the Churches.

HEAR! Hear what the Spirit says unto the Churches, and to every individual soul that has an ear to hear it. We have already heard "exceeding great and precious promises" made unto the Church: but in the passage before us there is a grandeur which overpowers the mind, and a depth which it is scarcely possible to fathom. What a thought! that you, who are here assembled, are soon to be made pillars in the temple of God above, provided you now "fight the good fight of faith," and obtain the victory over the enemies of your souls! Attend then, I pray you, and lift up your hearts to God for his blessing, while I endeavor to set before you,

***~~I. The reward prepared for God's victorious servants—~~***

***~~They shall be pillars in the temple of the Lord—~~***

The precise import of this promise it is not easy to declare; because the allusion which is here made to pillars erected in heathen temples had not anything to correspond with it in the temple of Solomon. As for the two pillars named Jachin and Boaz, they were in the porch of the temple, and not in the temple itself; nor had they any inscription whatever upon them. For the elucidation of our subject, we must look, not to them, but to a practice which obtained among the Greeks and Romans, of erecting *monuments*to their generals, who had obtained great success against their enemies. These were often pillars, with inscriptions on them; and they were placed, sometimes near the temples of their gods, and sometimes within them.

'Now,' says our blessed Lord, 'such pillars my victorious saints shall be in Heaven: "I will make them pillars in the temple of my God."' And whereas the pillars constructed in earthly temples must in time fall to decay, the saints should retain their honor through eternal ages: "They shall go no more out," the temple in which they are placed shall stand: and they also shall endure as long as Heaven itself shall endure, even through all eternity.

***~~On them, also, shall there be a suitable inscription—~~***

On the pillars in the heathen temples were inscribed the name of the God to whose power they ascribed the victories, and whom they sought to honor as the author of them. There was also written the name of the city that had given birth to this great general, or been the peculiar place of his residence: and further, there was inscribed also the name of the sovereign whose servant he was, or of the commander under whose direction he fought.

Now, in conformity with these customs, our Lord says, that on his people, who shall themselves be the pillars, he will "write" the name of "his God;" (for Jesus, as Man and as Mediator, calls Jehovah "his Father and our Father, and his God and our God,") yes, the name of Jehovah, who enabled them to gain the victory, and to whom alone the glory of it is due, shall be written upon them.

On them also shall be written "the name of the city of his God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of Heaven from his God." The New Jerusalem is the Church of God. And it "comes down from God out of Heaven," precisely as the tabernacle and temple did; a model of the one being shown to Moses for a pattern, and to David for the other. This descent of the city from Heaven is repeatedly mentioned in the Holy Scriptures: and it is deserving of particular notice in this place, because there is not a stone in the whole building which was not taken out from the quarry by God himself, and formed and fashioned for its station. The strokes that are given to each stone with the hammer and the chisel, are given in this world, at a distance from the temple above. When the stones are carried thither, the sound of any tool is not once heard; every stone being already fitted for the place, which, in His sovereign will, he has ordained it to occupy.

Further, on them also will our blessed Lord "write his new name, Jesus" which was given him at his birth: for He it is who called them to be soldiers, and directed all their efforts, and strengthened them for the combat, and beat down their enemies before their face; and, consequently, to Him also, as the Captain of their salvation, must all honor be ascribed.

Now then I say, "Hear," brethren, if indeed "you have ears to hear," what inconceivable honor is reserved for God's faithful servants: and attend yet further, while I endeavor to point out to you,

***~~II. The excellency of this reward—~~***

Methinks, nothing can add to the terms that are here used, or enhance the grandeur of the description here given. Yet it may be well to consider this reward in the light in which it will then appear:

***~~1. As the consummation of God's eternal purposes—~~***

From all eternity did God determine to take unto himself a people from our fallen race, and to exalt them to thrones of glory in his kingdom. From all eternity, also, did he "predestine persons to be his adopted children," and "choose them unto salvation," even to that very salvation which they will in due time enjoy. In their appointed season he "called them by his grace, and justified" them from their sins, and sanctified them by his Spirit: and when they shall be "glorified," then shall all his counsels be fulfilled, and all the wonders of his love be unraveled, from beginning to end.

Then will the reason of all his dispensations appear; just as does the reason of the builder's conduct towards every individual stone of a pillar, when it shall be found in a place ordained for it. O! how will this enhance the value of the reward, when the conferring of it shall be found to have occupied the Divine mind from all eternity; and *all the wisdom, and power, and love, and faithfulness of God shall be seen to have been employed in preparing the soul for the enjoyment of it.*

***~~2. As the completion of all Christ's glorious engagements—~~***

What he undertook was, to redeem our souls by his own most precious blood, and to search us out, and bring us home, and keep us in his fold, and introduce us finally to his fold above. The effecting of this was "the joy that was set before him;" in the prospect of which "he endured the cross and despised the shame, until he sat down triumphant at the right hand of God." And when he shall behold the exaltation of his redeemed people, then will he "see the travail of his soul, and be fully satisfied" with all that he ever did or suffered for the attainment of this great object.

Contemplate, then, the satisfaction which Christ will feel, in "making us such pillars," and in "inscribing all these characters upon us," (for in my text, you see it is his entire work;) and then tell me, whether the reward bestowed upon us be not, beyond all expression, great. *If viewed only as a benefit conferred, it is beyond measure glorious: but if viewed as the perfection of the Redeemer's work, it absolutely far exceeds all the powers of language to express, or of any finite comprehension to conceive.*

***~~3. As the crown of all our labors—~~***

This is that reward to which all the patriarchs looked: and for which Moses forsook all the pleasures and honors of the first nation upon earth. And it is by that, that all the saints, at this day, are sustained in their conflicts with sin and Satan. While here on the field of battle, they have some foretastes of that glory; for now "have they the Spirit of adoption, to cry Abba, Father;" now do they feel themselves to have come unto Mount Zion, and to be "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;" and now is "Jesus truly precious" to their souls.

These names, I say, are already written upon their hearts by the Spirit of God; yes, and "their own names, too, are written in Heaven." But still they have many conflicts, as long as they continue in this world: it is not until they get to Heaven that they "rest from their labors," but there they have their happiness unmixed with any alloy of pain or sorrow; "all tears having been wiped from their eyes by God himself; and "everything that can occasion pain having passed away forever!"

Was it, think you, a joy to the whole nation of Israel to see all their enemies dead upon the sea-shore? Be assured, that this is the happiness that awaits you: for as, on the one hand, "you shall never more go out" to meet your enemies, so "into that world shall nothing ever enter" to disturb your peace.

***~~4. As a monument erected to the honor of God himself—~~***

In monuments raised to our own naval and military commanders, even in those which are erected in the temples of our God, the creature is too much lauded, and God too much forgotten. But in Heaven, on every pillar is inscribed the name of God, and of Christ, and of that blessed city, the New Jerusalem, to which we belong: but in no instance is there any record of *self*. No, *self*is altogether forgotten there; and no praise is offered but to Him who redeemed us to God by his blood. Even the angels, who never sinned, utter not a word in commendation of themselves; but all unite in one harmonious song of praise, "to God, and to the Lamb, forever and ever."

Now, then, conceive of the millions, more numerous than the sands upon the sea-shore, established in Heaven as living and imperishable monuments of God's power and grace: how will this very circumstance enhance the blessedness of the redeemed! To honor God below, and be witnesses for Him on earth, was no little joy: but to be such monuments in Heaven, and to exhibit to all eternity the glory of that *God who ordered all*, and of that *Savior who accomplished all*, this will be indeed the perfection of bliss, and may well determine every soul of man to live only for the attainment of it.

And now, I ask,

Who among you will not enlist in this army? Or who, having once enlisted, will not fight manfully against all his enemies? Come, gird yourselves, brethren, for the combat: put on the whole armor of God: and never cease to fight in your Savior's strength, until he shall have crowned your efforts with victory.

You well know what efforts men will make, what labors they will sustain, what privations they will submit to, and what dangers they will encounter, for a corruptible crown, some title of honor, some earthly estate, or some monumental record that shall transmit their names to posterity; which yet they may never attain, and which, if attained, must soon perish. And shall there be anything for you to do or suffer in the prospect of this sure reward, which will be perpetuated through eternal ages? Fight then, I say, and "war a good warfare;" and rest assured, that, at the close of your contest, your triumph shall be complete, and this reward be accorded to you by that adorable Savior under whom you have fought.

#2501

***~~Epistle to the Church in Laodicea, part 1~~***

***~~[Revelation 3:14–16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.14â16)~~***

"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to vomit you out of my mouth!"

Wherever the leading truths of Christianity are maintained and professed, there may be said to be a Church of Christ. But it is too often found, that *the ministers of such Churches go on in the external exercise of their functions, without ever feeling the influence of the truth upon their own souls, or stimulating their people to high and heavenly attainments*. Thus it was with the Church at Laodicea: the pastor and the flock had shamefully degenerated from their former experience; and were resting in a state worse than any other of the Churches in Asia; a state wherein their Lord could see nothing to approve, but everything to condemn.

Having occasion to testify against them in so severe a manner, our Lord described himself precisely in such terms as the occasion required. Being about to declare what their *inward experience*was, as opposed to their *outward appearance and profession*, he spoke of himself as "the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness," whose testimony could not be controverted or questioned: he spoke of himself, also, as "the Beginning," that is, the Efficient Cause, or Ruler and Governor, "of the creation of God;" who, having all things at his disposal, would *with irresistible power execute all that his wisdom had decreed, and his lips had spoken*. Such being his perfections, "he could not be deceived, and would not be mocked."

In all of this we are interested, being alike bound to submit to his reproofs, and to dread his displeasure. Bearing in mind, then, *what a glorious Being we have for our Judge*, let us, with becoming reverence, consider,

***~~I. His REPROOF of that lukewarm Church—~~***

***~~Hear his TESTIMONY respecting them—~~***

"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot." Doubtless there was among them "a *form*of godliness," but they were altogether "destitute of its power." They would so far maintain religion, as to keep up a fair character before men; but not so regard it, as to approve themselves to God. If only they "had a name to live," it was all that they felt any concern about. In all the sublimer exercises of piety they were habitually and willfully deficient. As for delight in God, and zeal for his glory, they sought no such attainments. They had fixed for themselves a far lower standard, which required little, if any, exertion on their part; and beyond that they had no desire to advance.

***~~In just accordance with this was the JUDGMENT he denounced against them—~~***

"Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth." The terms here used to express the Savior's indignation against them are doubtless strong, and, to our refined notions, offensive. But they declare precisely *the loathing and abhorrence which such professors excite in the bosom of a holy God*. In truth, if we justly viewed the sinfulness of sin, and estimated with any degree of accuracy its utter malignity, we would feel, that no terms whatever can be too strong to express its odiousness, and the abhorrence in which it must of necessity be held by God, not only when it is manifested in a way of gross excesses, but when it appears even in a way of *secret defect*.

From this address to the Church of Laodicea, we shall do well to consider,

***~~II. The INSTRUCTION which it conveys to us—~~***

We must remember, that in every epistle *we*are called upon to "hear," with self-application, "what the Spirit says unto the Churches."

In this reproof, then, we are distinctly taught,

***~~1. That the religion of the world is hateful to God—~~***

The world, especially the more sober and thoughtful part of it, approves and applauds religion, when carried to a certain extent. But*it is the external part of religion alone that commends itself to the unregenerate man*. That which is really spiritual and heavenly, is rather to him an object of disgust.

A carnal man will say, 'Cast not off all religion: be not "cold," and regardless of all sense of duty to your God—but, on the other hand, lay not religion too much to heart, neither be "hot" after it, as is the manner of some, who can scarcely speak or think of anything else. Take a proper *medium*between these extremes, being "neither overmuch righteous," nor "overmuch wicked." Avoid equally what has the character of profaneness, and that excessive attention to divine things which borders on enthusiasm. *Moderation*is that which you must aim at; even such a moderation, as, while it satisfies God, will give no offence to man.'

But what says God to this? O brethren! far different from this is the standard which God approves; or, rather I should say, it is the very reverse of this. *Lukewarmness is that which God abhors*, yes, so abhors it, that nothing can be so offensive to the stomach of a man, as that is to him. He even declares,

***~~2. That, in some respects, lukewarm religion is worse than a total lack of all religion—~~***

Beyond all doubt, morality is in itself better than immorality, and an outward respect for religion better than down-right impiety and profaneness. But still, when our Lord says, "I would that you were cold or hot," he must be understood to say, that, on the whole, either extreme would have been preferable to the *medium*they had chosen. And this is true, for,

A mere formal religion is more dishonorable to God than open irreligion; because it is understood by all the world as intimating, that such a moderate measure of religion is, in our opinion, all that God deserves, and all that he requires; and that not even the love of God, in redeeming our souls by the blood of his dear Son, merits at our hands any better return than this. The ungodly man's life never has any such construction put upon it.

A mere formal religion, also, is more injurious to our fellow-creatures: for it says to every one who beholds us: This is the way to Heaven; this is the precise path, in which, if you walk, you will attain salvation. An ungodly man's life conveys no such sentiment to those around him. Nobody looks to him for a pattern; and therefore nobody is deceived by him: but by the *formal or hypocritical professor*the world are stumbled, when they see how little good is effected by religion; and weak Christians are kept back from aspiring after higher attainments.

A mere formal religion is yet further more fatal to our own souls. A man without any religion is open to conviction; and, if convinced of sin, will gladly accept the remedy provided for him in the Gospel: whereas a lukewarm professor is satisfied with what he has attained, and will not be persuaded that he needs any further progress.

Thus you perceive that the world and God are at odds upon this point: *the world approving of no religion but that which God hates; and God approving of none but that which the world abhors*.

*God*says, 'It is good to be always zealous for eternal spiritual realities.'

The *world*, on the contrary, says, 'Be as zealously in worldly pursuits as you will; but never carry your zeal into religion. In everything that relates to God and to your souls, *moderation*and not zeal must direct you.'

In confirmation of this, the world says, "*Seek*to enter in at the strait gate," and all will be well.

But God warns us to the contrary, saying, "*Strive*to enter in; for many shall *seek*, and not be able."

In a word, the world thinks it better to have no religion at all, than to be wholly under its power.

God accounts it better to have no religion, than such as does not engage and call into activity all the powers of the soul.

**III. Let me then ENTREAT you**, brethren,

***~~1. To examine the state of your souls before God—~~***

You find that these persons, who were so reproved, thought themselves "rich and increased with goods, and in need of nothing." Beware lest you also be led away by a similar delusion. Try yourselves, not by the world's standard, but God's. To what purpose will it be to be applauded by man, if God eternally condemns you? Why should you regard the judgment of man, if God approves you? Look into the Scriptures, and see, Which among the prophets did the world approve? or which among the Apostles? or when did they approve even Christ himself? The zeal and piety of these were objects of offence to the world, and to none more than to the self-righteous Pharisees: and, if your religion is such as the world approves, you need no other evidence that you are yet in a state offensive to God, and fatal to your souls. God "requires the heart;" and will be satisfied with nothing less. "A divided heart" he abhors. See to it, then, that you give up yourselves to him without reserve; and let nothing under Heaven interfere with your duty to your God.

Yet let me not be mistaken, as recommending wild enthusiasm. No; brethren, I would be as averse to wild enthusiasm as any; and would cry out against it as loudly as any. Wild enthusiasm consists in following some conceits of our own, without duly attending to the word of God. Against that I would guard you, with all my might.

But the world condemns all vital and experimental religion as enthusiasm: and by this device they seek to justify their own lethargy. Be not however, kept back by them; but, in obedience to the written word, and in dependence upon divine grace, endeavor to serve your God, as God himself is serving you, "with your whole hearts, and with your whole souls."

***~~2. To consider what your feelings will be when "The True and Faithful Witness," the Judge of the living and the dead, shall call you to his tribunal—~~***

Will you not then wish that you had "followed the Lord fully?" Will you not then have far different sentiments about religion, from those which the professing Christian world at large approves? And will it not be a matter of deep regret to you, that you feared man more than God, and obeyed man rather than God? Do but conceive what your feelings will be, when the great "Author and Governor of the universe" shall execute upon you the judgment threatened, and vomit you out, with the abhorrence which his word has so emphatically declared.

Remember, I pray you, it is not gross sin alone that will bring this judgment upon you: no; it is lukewarmness. Yes, though you have been ever so observant of outward duties, if your heart has not been in them, you are not accepted of your God. To what purpose will any man run, or strive, or fight, if he does not put forth all his strength, and exert himself to the uttermost to gain the prize? So, then, must you "be fervent in spirit, while serving the Lord," if ever you would "receive from him the crown of righteousness which fades not away."

#2502

***~~Epistle to the Church in Laodicea, part 2~~***

***~~[Revelation 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.17), [18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Revelation 3.18)~~***

"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see."

One would imagine that a person lukewarm in the concerns of religion must, of necessity, be filled with some good measure of doubt and fear. But the very reverse of this is found true: for experience proves that self-sufficiency and self-conceit are the invariable attendants of lukewarmness: in fact, they spring out of it naturally, as fruit from the root; for lukewarmness prevents self-examination; and a lack of self-examination begets security. The lukewarm person, feeling that he has within himself a sufficiency for all that he is inclined to do, easily persuades himself that he has also a sufficiency for all that he is bound to do: and under this delusion he rests satisfied with himself, without looking out for any assistance from God.

Now, this is a most fatal error; and if not removed, it will deprive us of all that Christ himself has purchased. That I may remove it from your minds, I will show,

***~~I. What MISTAKEN views this people had of their state before God—~~***

***~~"They thought that they were rich, and increased with goods, and in need of nothing"—~~***

This is the state of the Christian Church generally: I mean of that more respectable part of it which values itself on the avoiding of all extremes. Moral persons, who have a respect for religion, will readily enough acknowledge that they are not so good as they ought to be; but *they have no conception of the vast extent of their depravity*. Like persons possessed of earthly property, they feel a certain degree of self-congratulation, that they are "rich, and increased with goods, and in need of nothing."

Their *wisdom*is sufficient to guide them in the way to Heaven.

Their *righteousness*is sufficient to recommend them to the Divine favor.

Their *strength*is sufficient to fulfill their duties, whenever they shall address themselves to the performance of them.

This was the state of man in Paradise; and they suppose it to be so still. They are unconscious that their locks are cut; and therefore, in encountering their enemies, are under no apprehension of a defeat. It is possible, indeed, that they may not express these things in words, (though the Laodiceans scrupled not to affirm it;) but it is invariably the language of their hearts: and *in proof that these are the sentiments of their hearts, we may appeal to their daily experience*.

See whether, under a consciousness of their great needs, they are crying to God for the relief of them: if they be not, then is it clear that they feel not the urgency of their needs, or the extent of their necessities. And if any man in the universe were to manifest the same insensibility to his earthly needs, and the same indifference about obtaining a supply of them, we should all conclude, either that he was not so poor as he professed himself to be, or that he had means of supplying his needs which were hid from us.

***~~But, in the midst of all this self-sufficiency, they were indeed in the most destitute condition—~~***

The force of the original is peculiarly strong: it marks these persons as pre-eminently to be pitied. Respecting every such deluded sinner it may be said: Here is the man most truly "wretched," most eminently "miserable." And, in truth, there is perhaps no other person in the universe so miserable as he. The man who lives in all manner of iniquity is doubtless "a wretched and miserable" being; but the man who imagines himself rich in all good, while he is altogether destitute—is in a worse condition than he; because he holds fast his *delusions*, from which the other is free; and despises the *remedy*, which the other may, in due season, be prevailed upon to apply.

But the grounds of this assertion are here detailed: while he, in his own conceit, is "in need of nothing," he is in reality "poor, and blind, and naked."

He is "poor," for, whatever he may possess of intellectual or moral good, he has no more of spiritual good than Satan himself. He has no real love to God; no real delight in him; no real desire after him: no real wish to please and honor him. Whatever he may have which may resemble these, it is but a shadow: it has no substance; it has no root; it has no real existence: and in giving himself credit for it, he only deceives his own soul.

He is also "blind." Whatever capacity he may have in reference to earthly things, he has no "spiritual discernment," he has no just sense. . .

of the evil of sin,

of the beauty of holiness,

of the blessedness of serving God.

He has no idea of the loveliness of Christ, who is said to be "altogether lovely."

In a word, he sees nothing as God sees it: and because "he *says*that he sees," his guilt is the deeper, and his misery is the more intense.

He is "naked" too, having nothing to hide his deformity from the eyes of a holy God: for "all his righteous deeds are as filthy rags." He may, like our first parents, attempt to cover his nakedness with fig-leaves; but they will not suffice: for "the bed is shorter than he can stretch himself on, and the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in." This is, indeed, the state of unregenerate men, especially of those who "have the *form*of godliness without the *power*."

But let us now fix our attention on,

***~~II. The COUNSEL given them by our blessed Lord—~~***

In our blessed Lord there is a fullness treasured up for sinful man; and he invites all to come, and receive out of it according to their necessities.

**Are we poor?** He offers us "gold, to enrich us"—

What is this "gold," but the grace of Christ; and especially the *grace of faith*, which unites us to him, and puts us into possession of all "his unsearchable riches." This is gold indeed; and has, in cases without number, evinced its sterling worth, having endured the trial of the hottest furnaces which it has been in the power of man to kindle. See the long catalogue of saints recorded in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews; see what they thought of it; and how it enriched them. *Moses*found it amply to compensate for the loss of "all the treasures of Egypt," and multitudes of others found it more effectual for their advancement than all powers in the universe could have been. By this the poorest man is elevated to a state of inconceivable honor and happiness—even to peace with God on earth, and to all the glory and blessedness of Heaven.

**Are we naked?** He offers us "white clothing to cover us"—

This clothing is the unspotted robe of "*Christ's righteousness*, which shall be unto all and upon all them that believe in him." This the Lord Jesus Christ wrought out on purpose for us, by his own obedience unto death. Every soul that is clothed with that royal robe is so covered, that "not a spot or blemish" can be found in him; no, not by the all-seeing eye of God himself! It was for this very end that the Lord Jesus Christ became incarnate and died upon the cross: "He was the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believes," and every sinner in the universe, who trusts in Him, may claim him under that endearing name, "The Lord our righteousness."

**Are we blind?** He offers us "eye-salve to anoint our eyes, that we may see"—

This "eye-salve" is no other than the *Holy Spirit*himself, whom the Lord Jesus Christ will give to all who call upon him. It is the office of the blessed Spirit of God "to open our eyes, and to turn us from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God." And whoever has received "the unction of the Holy One, is enabled to discern the things of the Spirit, which before he could not see; yes, he is enabled, as the Scripture expresses it, to "know and understand all things."

***~~These things, indeed, he tells us to "BUY from him"—~~***

But what have we to pay? If, indeed, we are "poor, and blind, and naked," what can we give to him in return for such invaluable blessings as are here offered us? Were it required that we should present to him anything to *merit*these blessings, we might well sit down in despair. But the terms prescribed by him are exactly suited to our state: we are to "buy from him without money and without price." Not but that we are called to make some sacrifices, if we will indeed enjoy his blessings. We must give up our pride, and self-sufficiency, and self-conceit—yes, and all other "lusts, whether of the flesh or spirit," that are hateful in his sight. In other words, we must put off the filthy rags of our own righteousness, if we would possess the unspotted robe of his righteousness; and put far from us all conceit of our own wealth and wisdom, in order to receive the full benefit of his gold and eye-salve. And who will not gladly pay this price? It is the price which the beggar pays for the alms offered to him: he opens his mouth to ask for it, and stretches out his hands to receive it.

***~~III. And now, my brethren, I ENTREAT you,~~***

***~~1. Be sensible of your needs—~~***

Whether you are sensible of your need of these things or not, you do really need them; and your misery is so much the greater, if you think you need them not. What would you think of a poor maniac who should fancy himself a king? Would you envy him his self-delusion? Just such deluded creatures are you, while you are insensible to your real condition, as poor, and blind, and naked. Moreover, while you continue under this delusion, there is no hope whatever of your ever receiving the blessings which Christ has so freely offered you. It was not the proud self-applauding Pharisee, but the poor self-condemning Publican, that obtained mercy of the Lord: and it is written for the admonition of all future ages, that, in like manner, "he who exalts himself shall be abased; and he only who humbles himself shall be exalted."

***~~2. Comply, in all things, with the counsel given you—~~***

Go to Christ to obtain them. Think not to find them in any other: but say, "Lord, to whom should we go? You alone have the words of eternal life!" And be willing to receive them upon *his terms*. Dream not of bringing to him anything as a compensation for them, or as a warrant for your application to him. All your warrant is your spiritual poverty; and you have nothing to pay but your sins, which you are to cast on him, to be forgiven; and to cast from you, to be mortified and subdued.

Remember whose counsel this is: it is the counsel of "the Faithful and True Witness," who knows all your necessities, and who alone can relieve them. It is the counsel of him who is called, "The Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God." "Listen not then to flesh and blood," nor allow anyone to make you hesitate one moment: but go to him with all your needs—and receive at his hands all the blessings of grace and glory.

***~~3. Enlarge your expectations to the full extent of God's promises—~~***

Say not in your hearts, that this is too great, or that is too small to expect at his hands. There is no greater sin than "limiting the Holy One of Israel." He bids you "open your mouth wide, that he may fill it," and the more enlarged your expectations are, the more abundant will be his gifts. The fact is, that as there is not a need in you, for which there is not a suitable supply in him—so neither is there anything in him which shall not be made over to you, if only you will believe in him. Only come to receive out of his fullness, and he will give to you his grace, his peace, his righteousness, his glory! All shall be yours, the very instant that you are Christ's. Only come to him empty—and you shall be filled. The more empty you come—the more shall you be filled, and the more will he be glorified.

#2503

***~~Epistle to the Church in Laodicea, part 3~~***

***~~[Revelation 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.19)~~***

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. So be zealous therefore, and repent.

In the epistles to the seven Churches of Asia, there is an exceedingly rich variety of instruction, that is quite as applicable to us at this day as ever it was to the Church to whom it was first delivered. It is probable that some in Laodicea would regard the threatenings which were sent them in this epistle as a prelude to their utter destruction. They could not conceive that the Lord Jesus, who had threatened to "vomit them out of his mouth" with the utmost indignation and abhorrence, could entertain, in reference to them, any other sentiment than that of irreversible displeasure: and thus they were tempted to sit down in utter despair.

But our blessed Lord assured them, that these very threatenings were expressions of his love and pledges of his favorable acceptance, if only they would comply with the directions which he here gave them. But the words I have read contain, not only a particular instruction to them, but a truth of universal and unalterable importance to the Church in all ages. We here see,

***~~I. How the Lord Jesus Christ acts towards the objects of his love—~~***

God frequently gives to his enemies all that their hearts can desire. Are they anxious for wealth, and honor, and power, or for an increase of their families? Do they further desire a freedom from trouble, both in life and death? All this is bestowed upon them with so bountiful a hand, that they bless themselves as the happiest and most favored of mankind. Yes, to such a degree does this often happen, that the most eminent saints are stumbled at it. But towards those whom he loves, he, for the most part, acts very differently—them "He rebukes and chastens."

***~~1. He rebukes and chastens redeemed people by the declarations of his WORD—~~***

"The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," "yes, it is as a fire, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces," and when it comes with power to the soul, not the proudest sinner in the universe can withstand it.

When but four words were written upon the wall of the room where Belshazzar was feasting, "the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against the other!" And how it wrought upon the murderers of our Lord on the day of Pentecost, you well know: for three thousand of them cried out with one voice, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Doubtless, the terror inspired by this is often exceedingly appalling: but yet it is sent in love, "to convince men of their sin," and to bring them to repentance: and the deeper the wound that is inflicted by it, the greater evidence there is that God has sent it in love to the soul.

***~~2. He rebukes and chastens redeemed people by the afflictive dispensations of his PROVIDENCE—~~***

It often happens that men withstand the word of God, until they are visited with some *afflictive providence*: and not unfrequently repeated strokes of the rod are necessary, before they will hear and receive instruction from it. These dispensations are thought by many to be tokens of God's wrath. But, indeed, they are rather indications of his love: they are *paternal chastisements*, sent for our profit, that we may be humbled by them, and quickened, and "made partakers of his holiness."

It was for this end that many of the Corinthian Church were visited with pains and sickness: "they were chastened by the Lord, that they might not be condemned with the world." And how beneficially these afflictions operate, may be seen in *Ephraim*of old: "Surely I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: You have chastised me; and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Turn me, and I shall be turned: for you are the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yes, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." God then adds, "Is not Ephraim my dear son?" Had God felt no regard for Ephraim, he would have said, "Why should you be stricken any more? You will only revolt more and more," but, feeling towards him the affections of a Father, he says rather, "I will correct you in measure, and will not leave you altogether unpunished."

This truth established, we may see,

***~~II. How they in return should respond to God—~~***

Two things in particular were blamed in the Laodicean Church, namely, lukewarmness and self-sufficiency: and against these especially he directs them to strive, by the daily exercise of zeal and penitence. The same direction is proper for all whom he has chosen in Christ Jesus to be the objects of his love:

***~~1. Be zealous—~~***

It is not sufficient to perform a mere round of external duties, and to abstain from gross sins. Religion is everything, or it is nothing—it requires all the powers of the soul: and, if any of our faculties are alienated from God, or exercised only in a lukewarm way, the service, whatever it may be, will not be accepted. "In every good thing we should be zealous" and "be fervent in spirit, when we serve the Lord." It was thus that Phinehas, and Elijah, and Paul, and all the saints, served God in the days of old. As for our blessed Lord "the zeal of God's house consumed him." We also ought to be "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Nor must it be in one thing only that we are to display our zeal. It is possible enough that in one particular line we may exert ourselves with the greatest ardor; and yet be far from having our hearts right with God. We must "have respect to *all*God's commandments," and serve him "without partiality, and without hypocrisy." In public and in private we must be alike earnest in all our duties: and under "the constraining influence of the love of Christ, we must live altogether unto Him who died for us, and rose again."

***~~2. Repent—~~***

This is necessary for every child of man. There is no one so *pure*, but that he may increase in purity; nor so *holy*, but that he may grow in holiness; nor so *heavenly*, but that he may be more entirely devoted to his God. Of lukewarmness especially, and of the entire habit of mind connected with it, it befits us to repent. Indeed, whatever be the sin that more easily besets us, that we should search out with peculiar care, and for that should we in an especial manner humble ourselves before God. Every day of our lives we should "be sowing in tears, if we would reap in joy." It is not the person who occasionally feels some remorse, but "he who goes on his way weeping, bearing a precious seed-basket, and scattering this seed from it every step he takes; he it is that shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

***~~III. This subject clearly teaches us,~~***

***~~1. What to do under the prevailing influence of sinful corruptions—~~***

Pray to God that he would chastise you with scourges or scorpions, rather than allow you to continue under the power of sin. If God sees fit to put you into the furnace, be more anxious to obtain the sanctifying benefits of the affliction, than to have it removed.

***~~2. What to do under Divine rebukes—~~***

Receive them as the chastisements of a father, "neither despising them, nor fainting under them," and take occasion from them to "humble yourselves under His mighty hand." Whatever your sufferings may be, remember that they are far "less than your iniquities deserve." By these God designs to "purge away your iniquities," and, if they are attended with this effect, you will have reason to adore him for them, more than for any exemption from trouble that could possibly be given unto you: for so speaks an inspired Apostle: "Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for, when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love him."

#2504

***~~Epistle to the Church in Laodicea, part 4~~***

***~~[Revelation 3:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.20)~~***

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

Our blessed Lord, in his sermon on the mount, says, "*Ask*, and you shall have; *seek*, and you shall find; *knock*, and it shall be opened unto you." Now this is exactly what we might expect of a gracious God, and more especially of an all-merciful Redeemer. But who would ever imagine that this process should be inverted; and that, instead of a sinner knocking at the door of Heaven in fervent supplications; the Son of God himself should come and knock at the door of his heart, soliciting admittance there? Yet this is the representation given us in my text: so infinitely are "God's ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts." Let us contemplate this mystery: let us consider,

***~~I. The marvelous condescension of the Lord Jesus Christ towards our sinful race—~~***

***~~The hearts of men are shut and barred against him—~~***

"The strong man armed," even Satan, occupies the souls of men as his palace, and fills them with all manner of evil; and by his great power "he keeps them in peace," unconscious of their subjection to him, and altogether satisfied with their bondage. When the Lord Jesus Christ comes to seek admission there, every possible resistance is made to him. The lusts, which have taken possession of them, bar the door against him. Prejudice and unbelief determine them to obstruct his entrance; while the world, and all its lusts, maintain their post, with a steadfastness that bids defiance to every effort, save that which is omnipotent—

***~~But he "stands at the door, and knocks"—~~***

He comes to men in his **word**, and demands that they yield themselves up to him.

He comes also by the secret energy of his **Spirit**; and warns men of their danger, if they persist in their rebellion against him.

He comes also by his **providence**, to awaken them by terrors, or soften them by afflictions, if by any means he may prevail upon them to open to him.

Year after year does he "stand," "waiting to be gracious to them," and importuning them by every kind of argument to admit him. Of Israel it is said, that "forty years he put up with them in the wilderness." And many are the years that he has borne with us. The generality he finds so fast asleep, that not all the thunders of his law can waken them. Some are just roused from their slumbers: but, averse to receive him, they begin to put him off with frivolous excuses. Their language is like that of the Church of old; "I sleep, but my heart wakes. It is the voice of my Beloved that knocks, saying, 'Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.' But I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?" Still, however, does he continue knocking with invincible patience. So true is that saying of the prophet, "All the day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying peopled."

***~~What marvelous condescension is this!~~***

If we were to stand for any length of time imploring mercy from God, and were left without any answer of peace, it would be nothing but what our sins have justly merited; nor could we have the smallest reason to complain. But that the Lord Jesus Christ should sue in vain for admission into our hearts, appears incredible; or, at all events, we might expect him, after the first refusal of his overtures, to say, "They are joined to idols; let them alone!" "My Spirit shall strive with them no more;" from henceforth I "give them over to their own heart's lusts, to follow their own imaginations, until they have "filled up the measure of their iniquities!" "Wrath shall come upon them to the uttermost!"

But, "behold!" yes, well may it be said "Behold;" for His condescension exceeds belief. Do but reflect, *who*it is that thus waits upon us:

It is the *Creator*, importuning his guilty and rebellious creatures.

It is the *Judge*, following the criminal with entreaties to accept of pardon, and to let his sentence of condemnation be reversed.

It is the *self-sufficient God*, who would be equally happy and glorious if every child of man were left to perish like the fallen angels—who labors thus to ingratiate himself with the vilest of mankind, if by any means he may prevail on some of them to accept at his hands all the blessings both of grace and glory.

Say, I pray you, Is not this a condescension that surpasses all the powers of language to express, or of imagination adequately to conceive?

But this subject will appear more fully in its true light, if we consider,

***~~II. The MERCIES which he desires to impart unto them—~~***

***~~These are expressed under a familiar and most significant metaphor—~~***

The metaphor of a *guest*is not uncommon in the Holy Scriptures. Our Lord said to his Disciples, "If a man loves me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." And this shall be realized, in the most endearing manner, to all who open to him: "He will come in to them, and *sup*with them, and they with him." We cannot conceive of any act of *friendship*that is not comprehended under this term.

But how shall I convey any adequate idea of its import? What sweet manifestations of his love will he impart to the soul, and what rich communications of his grace! Who can fully explain that declaration of the Apostle, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ?" We may think of all the familiarities and endearments that ever were enjoyed, even among the most attached friends or relatives, and they will fall infinitely short of that blessedness which he will impart to the believing soul.

When he comes in to sup with us, he will, if I may so say, bring his own provision along with him. What "exceeding great and precious promises" will he set before us for our support! What tastes of his love will he give us, when he shall "shed it abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit?" And what foretastes also of his glory will he communicate, when he bids us to drink of the cup of his salvation!

Nor is there a person under Heaven excluded from this invitation—

His own word is, "If any man hears." It matters not how unworthy any man may be. If he had all the sins of Manasseh himself upon his soul, the mercy here offered should be imparted to him. We are told of *Manasseh*, that he filled Jerusalem itself with the blood of innocents, and made the people worse than the heathen whom the Lord had destroyed before them: yet, when he humbled himself, God heard his supplication, and made himself known to him under the endearing character of Israel's God.

We may be sure, therefore, that no person under Heaven shall be excluded from a participation of the grace that is here so freely offered. All that is required of any man is, to "hear the Savior's voice, and open to him." O that this were duly considered by us all!

Friends, you are not called upon to *merit*anything at the Savior's hands, but only to receive thankfully what he so freely offers. Only be sensible that you have hitherto excluded him from your hearts, while you have given a ready reception to the basest lusts; be sensible, I say, of this, and now open your hearts to him, and all the blessings of salvation shall be yours, for your present comfort, and for your everlasting possession!

***~~III. Application—~~***

***~~1. Those who are yet strangers to the Savior's love—~~***

The generality of men who call themselves Christians would quite revolt at the expression in my text, and at all the wonders of love contained in it. But, friends, wherefore is it thus with you? Is it because there is no truth in these representations? or because you have never yet sought to experience them in your souls? Would you but now open your hearts to him, truly, there is not one among you of whom it should not be said, that "Christ is gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner." But if you refuse his entreaties now—the time will come, when you shall cry to him, but not be heard.

***~~2. Those who have had some experience of it in their souls—~~***

Be not satisfied with any measure of fellowship that you have yet enjoyed with your Lord and Savior. You cannot expect, with Paul, to be caught up into the third heavens: but you may expect from the Savior such an abundance of grace and mercy and peace as shall be a foretaste of Heaven itself. Only cast out, with increasing zeal and diligence, the lusts that have occupied your heart, sweeping from every corner of it "the old leaven, that you may be a new lump," and your feasts with the Savior here shall be only a prelude to that richer feast which you shall enjoy above: for all with whom he has supped on earth shall "sit down with him at the marriage-supper of the Lamb in Heaven" for evermore!

#2505

***~~The Victor's Reward~~***

***~~[Revelation 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.21)~~***

To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

WE have seen at the close of every epistle a promise to him who overcomes. In truth, we all need encouragement in our warfare. It is the hope of profit or of honor that produces industry among all classes of the community: it prompts the philosopher to consume the midnight oil in study; the merchant to risk his property on the tempestuous ocean; and the soldier to brave the dangers and fatigues of war.

The same principle may well be extended also to spiritual concerns, and animate the Christian in the pursuits of religion. His reward indeed is infinitely greater than any which this world can afford, and may therefore justly stimulate him to the most indefatigable exertions. The utmost that the labors of man can attain on earth, is, a royal title and a temporal kingdom; but the Christian victor has a crown of glory laid up for him, and a participation of that very kingdom, which is possessed by Christ himself. The Judge of the living and the dead pledges himself to bestow this reward on all his faithful followers. His words lead us to consider,

***~~I. The Christian's CHARACTER—~~***

Every Christian is by profession a soldier; he has enlisted under the banners of Christ; and fights until he has vanquished all the enemies of his soul—

***~~The WORLD is not able to detain him in bondage—~~***

As for the *pleasures*of the world, they have no charms for any person who knows the value of his own soul. It requires scarcely any more self-denial to renounce them, than for a philosopher to put away the toys of childhood. A regard for its *honors*is not so easily overcome. The Christian would gladly at first retain his reputation among his former acquaintance; and sometimes perhaps makes undue sacrifices rather than forfeit his good name: but when he finds how impossible it is to be faithful unto God without incurring the censure of the ungodly, he learns at last to bear "the reproach of Christ," and to "rejoice that he is counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake."

The interests of the *world*still subject him to many and strong temptations, even after he has both done and suffered much for Christ; but when he has weighed both the world and his own soul in the balance of the sanctuary, he determines to forego every interest rather than endanger his eternal salvation. Thus he evinces that "he is born of God by overcoming the world."

***~~The FLESH also gradually loses its ascendency over him—~~***

Our inbred corruption is a more powerful enemy than the world, inasmuch as it is nearer to us, and ever with us. But the Christian maintains a conflict with it. He never is so perfect in this world but that he still carries about with him "a body of sin and death." "The flesh lusts against the Spirit" to the last hour of his life; but if any unhallowed appetite arise, he resists it to the uttermost, and will in no wise yield to its solicitations: or if it betrays him into any unworthy conduct, he will mourn over it, and cry to God for grace and strength to resist it; and will never be at peace, until it is utterly mortified and subdued.

A man's *besetting sin*is that which will, for the most part, give him most trouble to the end of his days. Thus "through the Spirit he mortifies the deeds of the body," and "crucifies the flesh with its affections and lusts." True, crucifixion is a lingering death: but still he has nailed his besetting sin to the cross: and it shall never regain its reigning power, though it will still continue to pour forth its venom against Christ to the latest hour of our lives.

***~~Nor can the DEVIL with all his hosts prevail against him—~~***

Satan is yet a greater adversary to the Christian than even flesh and blood; but the good soldier will not turn his back. He "girds on the whole armor of God," and "goes forth in the strength of the Lord God." Satan, like Pharaoh, (of whom he was the perfect archetype) casts every impediment in his way, and multiplies his thoughts of this world, to divert his attention from a better world.

When he cannot prevail to keep the Christian from the path of duty, he will endeavor, like that hardened monarch, to limit him in the prosecution of it. When that fails, he will contrive, if possible, to lead him astray, and to fix his attention on controversy, or politics, or something of inferior concern. When that will not succeed, he will labor either to "puff him up with pride, and thus bring him into the condemnation of the devil;" or to cast him down with despondency, and thus cause him to desist from his purpose. But the Christian repels all his fiery darts, "resists him manfully until he makes him flee," and finally "bruises him under his feet" as a vanquished enemy. This accords with the description given by John, "Young men, you have overcome the wicked one."

After having successfully maintained his conflicts, he receives,

***~~II. The Christian's reward—~~***

As a view of the recompense that awaits us cannot fail of animating us in our warfare, it will be proper to contemplate it with care—

Our Lord declares it in terms the most glorious that can be conceived: "The Christian shall reign with him"—

Christ is seated in Heaven on a throne of glory: but he does not occupy that throne alone; he admits his victorious followers to a participation of it. Nothing less than this is deemed a sufficient reward for them. It would be an unspeakably great reward, if we were only permitted to behold him upon his throne; but he assures us that we shall be exalted to sit thereon together with him, and thus to share both his honor and felicity. Such honor have all his saints; and he, as the arbiter of life and death, pledges his word that he himself will bestow this reward upon them. How blessed then must they be! how poor a recompense would earthly kingdoms be in comparison of this!

But the comparison which he here institutes, alone can put the promise in its true light—

Christ was once conflicting with his enemies, just as we are; but he overcame them upon the cross, triumphed over them in his resurrection, and led them captive in his ascension; and is now set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Let us view him then on his Father's throne, and we shall see what glory is reserved for us.

Like him, we shall rest from our labors: never harassed either by sin or sorrow any more. We shall dwell in the immediate presence of him whom we love; no longer viewing him at a distance, by the *eye of faith*, through the medium of the word; but beholding him face to face, seeing him as we are seen, and "knowing him as we are known."

We shall moreover receive all the happiness of which our natures are capable. He who was once a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief as his constant companion, now enjoys both in body and soul all the blessedness of the Godhead. In this we shall resemble him as far as anything finite can resemble what is infinite. Our capacities of happiness will be enlarged beyond our highest conceptions, and every one will be as blessed as his capacity will admit of.

Nor is Christ's exaltation merely a pattern of ours. He is our forerunner; and the exaltation of the Head is a pledge and earnest that all the members shall in due time be glorified together with him.

**Application**—

If such be the felicity of all Christian soldiers—then who will not enlist under the banners of Jesus? Who will not join himself to the Captain of our salvation, and give up his name to be enrolled among "the worthies of our *David*?" Let all of you, my brethren, flock to his standard, "like doves to their windows." Gird on your spiritual armor, and go forth to the fight. You have a Commander who can not only lead you and direct you in the battle, but can shield your heads, and heal your wounds, and strengthen your arms, and ensure you the victory. Soldiers, "behave like men; be strong." "Fight the good fight of faith," and trust in him for a successful outcome of your conflicts.

It is but a little time that you shall have to engage; and though you go forth only with a sling and a stone, Goliath shall fall before you. Only go forth in dependence upon your God, and you have nothing to fear. But O what have you not to hope for? What blessed triumphs! What glorious spoils! What everlasting shouts of victory!

Look at those who have gone before you in the combat; see them on their thrones, crowned with crowns of righteousness, and shouting with shouts of triumph. Soon, very soon, shall you be numbered among them!

Let none of you then go back to the world and sin. "If any man turns back," says God, "my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Fight on a little longer, and you shall not only be conquerors, but "more than conquerors." The completest victories that an earthly hero can gain, will afford him matter for weeping as well as for joy. But your victories shall be unalloyed with sorrow, and crowned with everlasting gladness. "War then a good warfare," and fight until you overcome. So shall you receive your promised recompense, and reign with your God forever and ever.

#2506

***~~The Voice of God to His Church and People~~***

***~~[Revelation 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.22)~~***

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the Churches.

PERHAPS there is not another expression in the whole Scriptures which occurs so frequently as this. Our blessed Lord, in the days of his flesh, used it very often at the close of his parables: and here, at the close of everyone of the epistles to the seven Churches of Asia, did he repeat it. Surely this marks its peculiar importance: and, to impress it upon all your minds, I will,

***~~I. Make some general observations arising out of it—~~***

The first thing which strikes us, on reading these words, is, that **there must be many who have no ear to hear the word of God—**

This is an awful truth. While there are some who "will not endure sound doctrine," there are multitudes who hear it without being at all affected with it. They even approve of it; but still never receive it truly into their hearts. On subjects connected with their temporal welfare they feel a great interest; but on these subjects which relate to eternity, they are unmoved: they are satisfied with hearing them; and when they have given them a respectful hearing, they think they have done their duty in relation to them: "they have *ears*, and hear not; they have *eyes*, and see not; they have *hearts*, but understand not," and, during the course of a long life, they either gain but very little insight into the great mystery of the Gospel, or acknowledge it as a mere theory, without any practical effect upon their souls.

The next thing which forces itself upon our notice is, that **the things spoken to the primitive Churches, so far as we are in similar circumstances with them, demand precisely the same attention from us that they did from them—**

I will grant, that, so far as the Scriptures applied solely to the particular circumstances of this or that particular Church, so far they are applicable to us only in their general tendency, or under circumstances similar to theirs. But the great mass of the inspired volume related to men as sinners, who needed mercy from God, and were bound to devote themselves altogether to God: and, consequently, it is applicable to mankind in all places, and in all ages.

Many, if a passage of Scripture be urged on their attention, will say that it was proper for the apostolic age, but inapplicable to us at this time. But men's duty to God is the same now as ever it was; and the way of acceptance with God is the same as ever: and therefore this objection is altogether futile, and unworthy of any serious notice.

We are not to expect a new Revelation, suited to our circumstances: on the contrary, we are enjoined, at the peril of our souls, neither to add to, nor to take from, the Revelation already given. The command given, that *everyone*who has an ear should hear what the Spirit has said to the Churches, shows, that not only were Christians then living to pay attention to what was spoken to their own individual Church, but that Christians, at every period of the world, should hear and obey what was spoken to the Churches generally.

The last thing which I shall mention, as offering itself to our notice from the words before us, is, that **we can never hope to be benefitted by the word we hear, unless we receive it as from God, and as dictated by inspiration from the Holy Spirit—**

It is "the Spirit of the living God that speaks to the Churches," and his authority must be regarded in every part of the written word, and in all that is delivered agreeably to it by those who minister in the name of God. The hearers of the Gospel are too apt to look at man; and to exalt Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, in their estimation, one above another, on account of some peculiarity in their ministries; forgetting, that, "whoever plants or waters, it is God alone who gives the increase."

Provided it be really agreeable to the standard of truth, the word, by whoever delivered, should "be received, not as the word of man, but, as it is indeed, the word of God." And if, in attending on the ordinances, this were habitually kept in view, there can be no doubt but that the power of God's arm would be more visible among us, and that the Holy Spirit would accompany it with far greater power to the souls of men.

After these brief remarks, arising out of the words of my text, I will,

***~~II. Draw your attention to one or two things in particular, that are contained in the foregoing epistles—~~***

The epistles to the seven Churches contain a great variety of matter, applicable to the existing state of each. In that letter to Laodicea, there is *unqualified reprehension*. In those letters to Smyrna and Philadelphia, there is *unqualified approval*. In the others, there is a *mixture*both of praise and blame. To enter into the peculiarities of those epistles would be altogether foreign to my present purpose. It is my intention to notice only the things which are spoken indiscriminately to all, and these are two:

***~~1. "I know your works"—~~***

This "the Spirit spoke" to every one of them, without exception: and therefore we may consider it as spoken to the Church of God in all ages. And a most solemn truth it is. Almighty God inspects the ways of every child of man. He knows what we do in our unregenerate state; he knows also what we do after we become followers of the Lord Jesus. He discerns infallibly the precise quality of all our actions; how far they accord with the written word; from what *principles*they flow; for what *ends*they are performed. He discerns also the *measure*of them, how far they correspond with the professions we make, the obligations we acknowledge, the advantages we enjoy. He sees everything which enters into the composition of them; how much of what is pure, and how much of what is selfish and impure.

In a word, he "weighs," not our actions only, but "our spirits;" and according to his estimate of them will he judge us in the last day. He will not form his judgment, in any respect, from the esteem in which we are held by our fellow men, or from the opinion which we have formed of ourselves: he will weigh us in the unerring balance of his sanctuary, and will "judge righteous judgment" respecting every individual of mankind.

***~~2. "To him who overcomes will I give"—~~***

This also is repeated to every Church. And it is of infinite importance to every child of man. Every saint has a conflict to maintain against the world, the flesh, and the devil: and he must not only fight a good fight against them, but must continue to do so, even to the end. As, in a race, it is not he who "runs well for a season," but he who finishes his course well, that wins the prize. Just so, it is not he who wars a good warfare for a time, but he who endures to the end, that will be crowned with victory. There is to be no enemy to which we are to yield; nor any period when we are at liberty to take our ease. We are never to be weary of well-doing, never to sink under any discouragement, never to turn our back even for a moment. We must act as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and fight under his banner to the last hour of our lives: and then may we be assured that victory, yes, and the rewards of victory too, shall be ours. "To him who overcomes," says our Lord, "will I give to sit down with me upon my throne; even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father upon his throne."

That these hints may produce their proper effect, I will,

***~~III. Point out the special ends to be answered by bringing them to your remembrance—~~***

Certainly I would wish them to be improved,

***~~1. For your HUMILIATION—~~***

I will suppose, that, like the members of all the different Churches, you profess to be faithful followers of Christ. I will also suppose that, in a good measure, you adorn your holy profession. Yet, when you remember what the heart-searching God has said, "I know your works;" which of you has not reason to hang down his head with shame and confusion of face?

If it were but a *man*, who had been privy to all the workings of our hearts since first we professed to serve God, we should not feel altogether easy in his presence: for though, by reason of his own imperfections, we might expect some allowances to be made in our behalf, yet the consciousness of what we were in his eyes would humble us even in our own, and would tend greatly to stop our mouths before him.

Should we not, then, put our hands on our mouths, and our mouths in the dust, before *God*, under the consciousness of our extreme unworthiness in his sight?

Let us individually apply to ourselves that solemn admonition, "I know your works." It is addressed to us individually, as much as if we were the only individual upon earth: and God has noticed us as particularly as if there had been no other person in the universe for him to notice. I pray you, brethren, bear this in mind; and learn to walk softly before God, all the days of your life.

***~~2. For your WARNING—~~***

When it is said, "To him who overcomes, will I give," it is evidently implied, that on this description of persons exclusively will any reward be conferred. Should not this, then, operate as a solemn warning to us? When any temptation presents itself to our minds, should we not consider what the effect will be—the ultimate and everlasting effect, of our compliance with it? Should we not balance against each other:

the gratifications of sense, against the joys of Heaven,

the sufferings of sense, against the pains of Hell,

the transitoriness of time, against the duration of eternity?

When persons, calling themselves our friends, would dissuade us from an entire surrender of ourselves to God—should we not bethink ourselves what they can do for us hereafter, or what recompense they can make us for the loss of Heaven? Let this, then, operate on our minds, with all the weight that it deserves; and let us never forget the admonition given here to every child of man, "To him who overcomes, and to him exclusively, will I give any portion in the realms of bliss."

***~~3. For your ENCOURAGEMENT—~~***

See the rewards held forth to all the different Churches; and then say whether you want encouragement to persevere? And remember who it is that says, "*I* will give." It is no other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Judge of the living and the dead. The world, it is true, makes promises also—but what can it give? If it could give you kingdoms, they were but a poor possession, which you must relinquish in a short time. And as for the mere gratifications of sense, your past experience will tell you how empty and vanishing they are. But, when Almighty God promises to you the glory and blessedness of Heaven, that may well allure you; for that shall live forever; and you shall live forever to enjoy it. "Have respect then, my brethren, even as Moses had, to the recompense of the reward," and "hold fast the rejoicing of your hope steadfast unto the end," and doubt not but that, in due season, there shall be given you "an unfading crown of righteousness and glory!"

#2507

***~~The Book with Seven Seals Opened by Jesus Christ~~***

***~~[Revelation 5:6–10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 5.6â10)~~***

And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

THE doctrine of the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ is that which sheds the brightest luster over our most holy religion. *It is his Deity which alone gives virtue to his sacrifice*, and renders it a sufficient atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. There are indeed many, who, while they profess a regard for Christianity, would rob it of its chief stay and support; and, to effect their object, will mutilate the very Scriptures themselves, and cut out of the sacred volume what they find themselves unable to controvert or distort.

But, methinks, if we were to grant for a moment that the saints on earth may have erred in giving to Jesus the same glory as they give unto the Father, (though their obligation to do so is, in my apprehension, as clear as the sun at noon-day,) have they also erred in Heaven? Are the glorified saints around the throne of God under a mistake? It is undeniable that they are worshiping the Lord Jesus precisely as they worship the Father. Consult the chapter which precedes my text. There we are informed, that "the four beasts (the four living creatures) rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come. And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that lives forever and ever; and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for you have created all things, and for your pleasure they are, and were created."

No one, I suppose, will doubt, but that in that passage worship is given to Jehovah the Creator of all things, and as the one supreme God. Now compare the words of our text, and there you will find the same persons (the four beasts and four and twenty elders) with the very same posture (that of utter prostration) in precisely similar language adoring the Lord Jesus Christ as their Redeemer; and all the angels in Heaven confirming this act of theirs in terms the most exalted that could possibly be used, and uniting both the Father and the Son in one song of praise, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing: therefore, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

In opening to you this song of the redeemed, I shall bring before you,

***~~I. The OCCASION of it—~~***

This is particularly adverted to in our text—

There was "in the hand of Him who sat upon the throne a book written both within and without, and sealed with seven seals." To conceive of this book aright, we must bear in mind, that it was a volume, rolled up, and consisting of seven parts, each rolled within another, and having a distinct seal affixed to it, so that the contents of one only could be known at a time, the opening of the first making a way for the second, and the second for the third, and so on in succession throughout the whole.

But to open the book, and loose the seals thereof, was beyond the power of any created being: there was "not one found worthy of this honor in Heaven, or in earth, or under the earth." On this account, the Apostle tells us, "he wept much." He had no doubt but the contents of that book were of infinite importance to the Church and to the world, because *it contained a record of God's secret purposes respecting both the one and the other to the end of time*; and it was not from the disappointment of an idle curiosity that he wept, but from an apprehension that God would be less glorified by the concealment of his purposes than by a revelation of them to his Church.

To his great joy, however, One was found, who was "worthy to open this book," even the Lord Jesus Christ, who was here characterized as "The Lion of the tribe of Judah, and as the Root of David." Under the former character, the Messiah had been revealed to Jacob; and under the latter, to David, as David's Lord. But it was under a new character that he prevailed to open the book, even as "a Lamb that had been slain," even as that Lamb of God, that having offered himself a sacrifice for the sins of men, yet bears upon his person the marks of all the cruelties and indignities that he suffered upon the cross.

Yet, though bearing these marks of his humiliation, he is represented as "having seven horns, and seven eyes," even all perfection of power and of wisdom also, of which there is none in the whole universe, that does not emanate from him: for from him proceeds the Holy Spirit, in all his diversified influences and operations, to the utmost ends of the earth.

This glorious Person "went to him that sat upon the throne; and took the book out of his hand," in order to loose the seals thereof, and to open its contents: and immediately the living creatures and the elders burst forth into the song of praise. What occasion this circumstance afforded them for their song, will be more profitably noticed under a distinct head, after we have considered, as we now proceed to do,

***~~II. The SONG itself—~~***

Of the living creatures and the elders, we are told, that "every one of them had *harps*, and golden vials full of *incense*, which are the prayers of saints." There is here, beyond a doubt, a reference to the temple service. In the temple-worship harps were used in blessing and praising God: and, "when the priests went into the sanctuary to burn incense, all the people continued praying without." Thus these worshipers, being all, as we shall see presently, made priests unto God, they had in their hands censers full of incense, through the incense of which "the prayers of the saints" ascended up with acceptance before God. Not that the glorified spirits are mediators between God and us: no, "there is but one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus;" but, as the efficacy of his intercession was typified by the incense offered by the priests, so was it further intimated in this vision, where all were executing, as it were, the priestly office, which in this very song they claimed as pertaining to them.

In the song which they sang, and which was "a new song," they celebrated the praises of that adorable Lamb, and gave him thanks for,

***~~1. The work of redemption as wrought out by him—~~***

Here all, without exception, to whatever nation, or kindred, or tongue, or people they belonged, traced their reconciliation with God to one common source, the atoning blood of Christ. Not one of them all presumed to claim a share in that glorious work, or to ascribe any part of it to his own strength or goodness: there was but one song among them all;

all acknowledged equally, that they had once been slaves of sin and Satan;

all confessed their obligations to Christ, for interposing for them;

all referred to his blood as the price paid for their redemption;

and all with one consent joined in saying, "You have redeemed us to God by your blood."

Greatly were it to be wished that all self-justifying Pharisees would learn of them; and that those who look for acceptance, either in whole or in part, through any works of their own, would fix in their minds what song they will sing, if ever they shall be admitted to the realms of bliss. That they will not be able to join with those who are already before the throne, is evident; for not any share of the glory do they claim to themselves; they ascribe it all to Him who bought them with his blood: and be it known to you, that not one soul shall ever be joined to that blessed assembly, who is not like-minded with them, and has not learned already to give the entire and undivided honor of his salvation to "the Lamb that was slain!"

***~~2. The benefits of redemption as experienced by themselves—~~***

Wonderful was the honor to which they were exalted, all being "kings and priests unto God;" "kings" to exercise dominion over all the enemies of their salvation: and "priests," to offer spiritual sacrifices before him forever and ever.

To a yet further extension of their privileges also they express themselves as looking forward, when they add, "And we shall reign on the earth." Some have thought, that, in the Millennium, the saints will come down from Heaven, and reign on earth a thousand years. But I rather understand the expressions which refer to that period, as importing, not that the departed saints will actually rise from the dead, and reign on earth, but that, so universal will be the reign of piety at that period, that it will appear as if all the departed saints had risen to dwell on earth. This much is certain: that the day is coming, when "the saints shall take the kingdom," and piety shall reign as triumphantly on the face of the globe, as hitherto impiety has reigned: and, in the prospect of this, the saints in glory may well rejoice, and consider themselves as participating in the blessed event!

And all these benefits, both to themselves and to the world at large, they trace to the death of Christ as the one procuring cause: "You were slain," and have brought us thereby into this happy state. To the same blessed source also must we trace all our privileges, and all our hopes: tasting redeeming love in all, and giving the glory of them all to "the Lamb that was slain."

But, as it does not at first sight appear how this song could arise from the occasion that called it forth, I shall proceed to mark,

***~~III. The connection between the two—~~***

Recall to mind what the occasion was. *The book which was sealed with seven seals contained all the purposes of God towards his Church and people forever and ever*. And none but the Redeemer himself was found worthy to open it. But, when he took it into his hand with a view to open it, then all the redeemed burst forth into this song of praise; expressly founding their acknowledgments on this as their proper ground. Now this they might well do; because,

***~~1. The events themselves recorded in that book, all arise out of his work of redemption—~~***

Had not the Lord Jesus Christ given himself a sacrifice for the sins of men, there would have been no difference between our fallen race and the fallen angels: all having alike transgressed, they would all have paid the penalty of transgression, and been consigned over, the one as well as the other, to irremediable and everlasting misery. But the Lord Jesus Christ having purchased to himself a peculiar people, the purposes of God respecting them are infinitely diversified, every one of them being destined to experience trials and deliverances peculiar to himself, in order to fit him for that precise measure of glory ordained for him from all eternity. Who then should open this book but He from whom it has derived its existence, and to whom all the blessings contained in it must be traced as their proper source?

***~~2. They will all issue in the felicity of his redeemed people—~~***

Much indeed is spoken in that book respecting the persecutions of the saints, all of whom are said to come out of great tribulation: and can it be said that such dispensations minister to their happiness? I answer, YES; even in this present life, the trials to which they are subjected by their enemies, work for their good, inasmuch as *they tend to the perfecting of their graces, and lead to a more abundant supply of heavenly consolations*. And, in the world to come, the weight of glory assigned to each, is proportioned to what every individual sustained for his Lord, and to the fidelity with which he executed his Lord's commands. The book, like the cloud at the Red Sea, was dark on the one side, even darkness itself; while on the other side it was luminous as the noon-day sun: and in both respects it subserved the interests of Israel: so, whether the dispensations contained in that book are dark or light, they shall all tend to the security of the saints and the completion of the deliverance ordained for them.

***~~3. They will all reflect glory on him as the Redeemer—~~***

We may easily conceive of this as far as the mercies are concerned: but is it true also of the *judgments?* Can we imagine, that the calamities inflicted on his enemies on earth, and the infinitely heavier judgments executed on them in Hell, shall bring glory to the Redeemer? Look into the book of the Revelations, and you will find, that *the condemnation of the wicked, no less than the salvation of the righteous, is an occasion of triumph to the hosts of Heaven, and calls forth the devoutest acknowledgments and hallelujahs to Almighty God!*

Here then the acknowledged right of "the Lamb" to open the book, and the acclamations of his redeemed on seeing him undertake to open it, stand in the closest connection with each other, and form one great subject, worthy of our devoutest attention.

This book of the Church's destinies, though opened as to the seals, is yet but very indistinctly seen by any: nor will it be fully known, until the events contained in it are fulfilled.

***~~Applications—~~***

**1. Are there not some among us to whom the whole of revelation is yet "a sealed book?**"

It is to be feared that, notwithstanding all our advantages for knowing the great truths of revelation, they are yet but very imperfectly understood by the generality. Take the work of *redemption*, and interrogate the great mass of Christians respecting it, and you will find that the grossest errors obtain in relation to it. The freeness, the fullness, the excellency of the Gospel salvation are but very imperfectly seen, and very unworthily appreciated.

Dear brethren, if John "wept much," because he could not gain an insight into the *book of God's decrees*, what reason have many of you to weep, yes, to weep even floods of tears, on account of your ignorance of the Gospel of Christ, of that which "he who runs may read," and of that on which your everlasting salvation depends.

O, look to the Lamb of God to open it to you; and cease not to weep and pray, until he has revealed to you the glorious mysteries contained in it.

***~~2. Are there not, however, others to whom its blessed truths have been made known?~~***

Yes, surely, there are not a few, "the eyes of whose understanding have been opened," and who have been enabled to behold "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Who then among you are of that happy number, who can say, "Whereas I was once blind, I now see!" To you I say, Imitate the hosts above: give glory to your Lord and Savior: shout forth his praises: sing without ceasing "to Him who has redeemed you to God by his blood, and made you kings and priests unto God and the Father."

To you also I say, Look to it that you "reign on the earth." You are no longer "the servants either of men" or devils: "being bought with a price, you are His" who bought you, and must do his will, and seek his glory, even his alone. None are you to *fear*, but Him: none to *love*, in comparison of him: none to *serve*, but in subordination to him. You are to be training now for Heaven, and learning the song of the redeemed while yet on earth; that when the harps shall be put into your hands in the realms above, you may not strike the chords as novices, but as those who are well instructed in the heavenly science, and fully prepared to bear your part among the celestial choir.

#2508

***~~The Doxology of the Redeemed~~***

***~~[Revelation 5:11–13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 5.11â13)~~***

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!" And every creature which is in Heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

WE know at present but very little of the blessedness of Heaven: yet the word of God enables us to form some faint conception of it. John draws aside the veil, and reveals to us,

***~~I. The assembly which he saw—~~***

***~~The inhabitants of Heaven are composed of angels and glorified saints—~~***

The *angels*are those who "kept their first estate," from which others fell. The *saints*are spoken of under two characters, "the beasts, or living creatures," and "the elders." The former are supposed to represent the ministers of Christ; and the latter, the members of the Church: they altogether compose one body in and under Christ.

***~~Their number exceeds all computation—~~***

The way to Heaven has always been a "strait and narrow way;" yet from the death of Abel their number has been continually increasing: their collective number is inconceivably great.

***~~The saints take the lead in the worship—~~***

They are represented as standing nearest to the throne: they begin the song, and the angels join in chorus.

There is perfect harmony throughout the whole assembly.

***~~II. The Object they adored—~~***

Many deny that Christ is a proper object of worship. But he has ever been worshiped in the Church—

Paul prayed to him, and received an answer from him. Stephen addressed him, as Christ himself had before addressed the Father: the offering of prayer to him characterizes every true Christian.

***~~He is the object of universal adoration in Heaven—~~***

He is the person described in the text and context. The description given is applicable to him alone.

***~~He is expressly joined with the Father as an equal object of worship—~~***

The terms used are the same, and they are addressed alike to both.

***~~The worship they offer him is such as is proper to God only—~~***

***~~III. The adoration they offered Him—~~***

***~~The heavenly hosts do not offer blind and ignorant devotions: they proclaim the Redeemer's worthiness of divine honor—~~***

Stronger expressions of adoration are no where offered to the Father: the accumulation of words expresses the fervor of their hearts: their view of his essential glory must convince them of his worthiness; but they most admire him in his mediatorial character: the angels, though not interested as we, gladly unite their praises.

***~~They all join in this unitedly, and with a loud voice—~~***

Those from earth, and sea, etc. are the spirits of departed saints: all seem to vie with each other without one discordant voice.

***~~Infer—~~***

***~~1. How great is the privilege of the saints!~~***

The saints are even now joined to this blessed assembly:

they have the same views of Christ's worthiness and glory:

they are engaged in offering the same praises and adorations:

they are daily growing in a fitness to join the saints above.

How glorious, how desirable is this privilege! Let all seek it by faith in the Lamb that was slain.

***~~2. How astonishing is the folly of the unregenerate!~~***

This blessedness is offered to all who will believe in Christ; yet the unregenerate "make light of it." But would they think it so contemptible if they had such a vision of it as John had? Would they despise it if they could see the state of the damned as contrasted with it? May God convince them of their guilt and folly!

***~~3. How inconceivably glorious must Heaven be!~~***

Here the felicity of the saints is often great; but hereafter it will transcend our utmost conceptions. Let us frequently rehearse here, that we may be more fit to perform our part on the theater of Heaven.

#2509

***~~The Worship of Heaven~~***

***~~[Revelation 7:9–12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 7.9â12)~~***

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

IN the book of the Revelations of John there is more spoken of Heaven than in all the inspired volume besides. But so greatly are the circumstances diversified, that, though the subject is ever so often brought under our review, it will always be found to wear a different aspect, and to afford fresh matter for profitable consideration. Indeed so important are those different circumstances, that we would suffer a great loss, if we did not successively fix our attention upon them as they arise.

The passage before us might afford us a just occasion for entering into the subject at large; because we behold here the worship both of the saints and angels: but we prefer noticing some particulars which distinguish this individual passage; and for that purpose shall set before you under one head *the worship of Heaven*, and then the instruction to be derived from it.

Let us notice, then,

***~~I. The worship of Heaven—~~***

We behold it here,

***~~1. As commenced by the glorified saints—~~***

There was of them "a multitude which no man could number, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." Previous to this period the Gospel had spread throughout all the Roman empire, and more especially if we consider the time spoken of as being after the accession of Constantine to the imperial throne, and to the Christian faith. The sealing of the hundred and forty-four thousand is supposed to refer to the peaceful state of the Church at that period. Doubtless, during the three first centuries of the Christian era, incalculable numbers of souls had embraced the faith, and been exalted to glory: and those added to all that had been found faithful to their God under the Mosaic dispensation, and to all the Lord's "hidden ones," in every nation under Heaven from the beginning of the world, must have gradually swelled the number to a multitude countless as the sands upon the sea-shore.

These all "stood before the throne, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." Perhaps the robes, as well as the palms, were emblems of triumph: or they might denote their perfect purity, being cleansed from all their guilt in the fountain of Christ's blood, and washed also from all defilement by the sanctifying efficacy of his Spirit.

We are told this indeed in the verses immediately following our text: "Who are these that are arrayed in white robes? These are those who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The palms in their hands proclaim them victors in the spiritual warfare. While on earth, they sustained many and arduous conflicts: but they overcame their enemies, and "were more than conquerors through him who loved them."

But do they trace in any respect their salvation either to their own strength or goodness? No, not in any degree: they all without exception ascribe their "salvation to God," as the great Original from whose wisdom, and goodness, and power it has proceeded; and "to the Lamb," who purchased it for them through his own most precious blood. This is their one unvaried song: and they sing it "with a loud voice," as glorying in a salvation so dearly bought, and so freely given.

***~~2. As continued by the angelic hosts—~~***

The situation of the angelic hosts is worthy of particular attention: they are round about the throne indeed, as well as the redeemed; but in an exterior circle, and more remote from the common center; for they are "round about the elders and the four beasts." They, though spotless, have but a *creature-righteousness*, while the redeemed, though guilty, possessed the righteousness of the Creator himself; and therefore are counted worthy of a nearer access to him than the angels are able to attain.

Nor is their attitude less worthy of remark; for they, though sinless, "fell upon their faces before the throne," accounting no posture too humiliating for creatures however exalted, while occupied in the worship of their God.

Unable to join in the song of the redeemed as applicable to themselves who have never fallen, they yet add their hearty "Amen" to all that the redeemed have uttered, acknowledging that all possible praise is due to God and to the Lamb for such marvelous displays of their power and grace.

At the same time they vie with the saints in all suitable expressions of adoration and love to their beneficent Creator; viewing with exquisite delight all the Divine perfections as visible in the works of creation, and as exhibited with yet brighter splendor in the stupendous mysteries of redemption. Every term whereby they can evince their gratitude, they accumulate, with an ardor which no words can adequately express; and then add again their "Amen," as concentrating in itself all that with the utmost efforts of their nature they are able to convey.

Slight as is this view of the heavenly worship, it will suffice for the present occasion, if we duly attend to,

***~~II. The INSTRUCTION to be derived from it—~~***

It will be found well calculated to teach us,

***~~1. Our OBLIGATIONS—~~***

If we call to mind the faculties with which we are endowed, so far superior to all other creatures, and inferior to the angels alone—we shall see that we also have reason to adore our God for the blessings of our creation, as well as the angels themselves. And *for the wonders of redemption, we are altogether on a par with those who are already before the throne*. The same stupendous efforts have been made for us, as for them. For us was God's co-equal and co-eternal Son sent into the world, as well as for them. For us He lived, and died, and rose again, as well as for them. To us is salvation offered, as freely as ever it was for them; and for us it shall be alike effectual too, if only we embrace it as they did. The only difference between them and us is, that they are put into possession of that which is kept in reserve for us, against the time ordained by the Father for us to possess it. We have the same aid afforded to us that was effectual for them; and the very instant the work of grace is perfected in us, we shall be summoned to the very place that is now occupied by them, and to all eternity shall unite with them in the same blessed employment of singing praises to God and to the Lamb.

We can conceive somewhat of their obligations—let us then in theirs view and acknowledge our own also.

***~~2. Our DUTIES—~~***

The robes of the redeemed are emblematic of their purity, as the palms in their hands are of the victories which they gained. But how did they attain their purity? By continued applications of the blood and Spirit of Christ to their souls. And how did they gain their victories, but by fighting manfully in the strength of Christ? Behold then how we must be occupied while sojourning here below. *We must day and night wash in the fountain that was once opened for sin and for impurity: our very holiest services, no less than our grossest abominations, must be purged from guilt by the blood of Christ.*

At the same time we must mortify the whole body of sin by the influence of the Spirit of Christ: the one labor of our life must be to grow up into the Savior's image, and to "purify ourselves, even as he is pure."

But while striving after these things we shall have many *conflicts*to maintain: we have *enemies*to encounter both without and within; and we must fight manfully against them all; nor ever for a moment relax our efforts, until Satan and all his hosts are forever "bruised under our feet."*It was not by mere inactive wishes that any of the saints in glory triumphed, but by warring a good warfare*. And in like manner must we also "fight a good fight, and finish our course, and keep the faith" even to the end, if ever we would attain "the crown of righteousness that never fades away."

***~~3. Our ENCOURAGEMENTS—~~***

Which among the heavenly hosts did not once feel the same discouragements that we experience? But God in his tender mercy carried on and perfected his work in their souls: and he is equally willing to accomplish in us also all the good pleasure of his goodness, if we will look to him, and commit our cause into his gracious hands. He will never leave us or forsake us, any more than he forsook and abandoned them: and "in our weakness is he willing to perfect his own strength," as much as he ever did in theirs.

There is no *trial*to which we can be subjected, that was not experienced by them in their day; nor was there any *support*afforded to them, that shall not be dispensed to us also in the hour of need. They in their day envied those who had gone before them, as you do them: and in a little time will others arise to envy you, when your warfare shall be finished, and your blessedness be complete.

Remember that "He who sits on the throne" is as much interested in you as ever he was in them; and that "the Lamb" is as tender over you as ever he was over them. Only rest on a promise-keeping God, and he will never fail you. He has promised that "none shall pluck you out of his hands" but that he will preserve you unto his "heavenly kingdom," and "faithful is He who has called you; who also will do it."

#2510

***~~The Felicity of the Glorified Saints~~***

***~~[Revelation 7:13–17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 7.13â17)~~***

Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

THE more light and knowledge God has communicated to us, the more ready shall we be to confess our ignorance, and to receive instruction from those who are qualified and appointed to teach us. *Unsanctified knowledge indeed will puff us up with conceit*; but that which comes from God, will lead us to God with deeper humility. The Apostle John was distinguished above all the Apostles by special tokens of his Master's favor; insomuch that he was called "the Disciple whom Jesus loved." Nor was he less distinguished by the multitude of revelations that were given to him.

In the chapter before us he records a vision which he had of the heavenly world, wherein he saw all the hosts of Heaven, and heard the anthems which they sang before the throne of God. Being interrogated by one of the celestial choir respecting the persons whom he had seen, Who they were? and, Where they had come from? he modestly declined offering any opinion of his own; and, in hopes of obtaining information from him, confessed the superior intelligence of this divine messenger. The desired information was immediately imparted: he was told, in the words we have just read,

*Whence*they came;

*How*they came thither; and

The *nature*and extent of their felicity.

Taking this therefore as the distribution of our subject, we shall show, respecting the glorified saints,

***~~I. Whence they came—~~***

Perhaps the persons whom the Apostle saw, were those who had suffered martyrdom for the sake of Christ. But "it is through much tribulation that every Christian must enter into the kingdom of Heaven." Persecution indeed does not rage equally at all times, or affect all in an equal degree: but "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus *must*suffer persecution." It is necessary that they should endure it, not only to prove the sincerity of their faith, but to accomplish, in many other respects, the gracious purposes of God towards them.

Besides, there are numberless other troubles, which are peculiar to the true Christian, and are more afflictive than the most cruel persecution. The *temptations*of Satan are often like fiery darts that pierce the soul, and inflame it with a deadly venom. The *body of sin and death*, which even the most exalted saints carry about with them to the last hour of their lives, often drew from the Apostle tears and groans, which his bitterest enemies never could extort. *He could rejoice and glory in the sufferings which they inflicted; but a sense of his indwelling corruptions broke his spirit, and humbled him in the dust.*

There is yet another source of tribulation, which, when opened, overwhelms the soul with inexpressible anguish. The *hidings of God's face*were the chief ingredient of that bitter cup, which so distressed our adorable Savior, that his "soul was sorrowful, even unto death." Nor are any of his followers so highly privileged, but they at times cry out by reason of dereliction, and feel a grief too big for utterance. Hence then may it be said of all that are in Heaven, That they came thither through much tribulation; or, as it is spoken by the prophet, That "the third part, the chosen remnant, are brought through the *fire*."

But as they are a *remnant*only who partake of that glory, while by far the greater part are left to perish in their sins, it will be proper to inquire,

***~~II. How they came thither—~~***

Though *tribulation*is the way to Heaven, and, when suffered for the sake of Christ, is the means of advancing us to higher degrees of glory; or, as the Apostle says, "works out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," yet is it by no means *meritorious*in the sight of God: if our trials were ever so great, ever so long continued, and ever so patiently endured—they would not expiate our guilt, or purchase the remission of one single sin!

Nor is *repentance*, however deep, at all more available for the removal of our guilt. As well might the Ethiopian hope to change his complexion, or the leopard to wash away his spots in water, as we to cleanse our souls from the stains they have contracted, even though we could bathe them in rivers of tears. But though neither the tears of penitence, nor the blood of martyrdom, can avail for the washing of our robes, "there is a fountain opened for sin and for impurity," a fountain in which "sins of a crimson dye may be made as white as snow."

The blood of the Lamb of God was shed for this very purpose, and is ever effectual for this end. And if we could ask of every saint that is in Heaven, How came you hither? Whence had you this white robe? There would be but one answer from them all; all without exception would acknowledge that "their own righteousnesses were as filthy rags;" and that they "washed them white in the blood of the Lamb."

This is noticed in the text as the express reason of their being exalted to glory; they washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb; therefore they are before the throne of God. And, if ever we would go thither, we must go in the same way, and "be found in Christ, not having our own righteousness, but his divine righteousness."

That we may be stirred up to seek a participation of their privileges, let us consider,

***~~III. The nature and extent of their felicity—~~***

While we are in this world we can form but very inadequate conceptions of what is passing in Heaven. But respecting the glorified saints the text informs us, that,

***~~1. They serve God—~~***

*Heaven is not a scene of inactivity, but of constant diligence in the service of God.* As God dwelt visibly in the temple, and the chambers of the priests surrounded him on every side; and as the priests ministered before him in white garments, all in their courses attending upon him by day and by night—so he is represented as seated on his throne in Heaven; and all his saints being made priests unto him, they surround his throne clothed in white robes, and minister unto him, not in rotation, but all together, with incessant watchfulness. They once were prevented by their infirmities, and by the very necessities of nature, from glorifying him so continually as they would have wished; but now their powers are enlarged, and *they can serve him without weariness and without distraction*. Now also *they have a freedom from everything that could at all abate their happiness in his service.*

When they were in the flesh they had many *wants*yet unsupplied, and many trials that were grievous to flesh and blood. If they had lost their desire after earthly things, yet they hungered and thirsted after God, and felt many painful sensations by reason of their distance from him. But now every trial is removed: the sun of *persecution*no longer lights on them; nor do the *fiery darts of Satan*any longer wound their souls. Hence *their services are unintermitted, and their happiness is unalloyed*.

***~~2. God serves them—~~***

Both the Father and Christ delight to minister to their happiness. The *Father*has long "pitied them, as a parent pities" his dear afflicted infant; and, rejoicing with them in the termination of their trials, now "wipes the tears from their eyes," and receives them to his everlasting embraces!

The *Lord Jesus*too, who, though on his throne, is yet "as a Lamb that has been slain," delights to minister unto them. Once, as the great Shepherd of the sheep, he sought them out, and brought them home on his shoulders rejoicing, and fed them in green pastures, and made them to lie down beside the still waters. The same office does he still execute in Heaven, where his widely scattered flock are collected, as "one fold under one Shepherd." There he feeds them in far richer pastures than they ever saw below, and "leads them from the streams, to the living fountains" of consolation and bliss. Incessantly does he give them brighter discoveries of all the Divine perfections as harmonizing, and as glorified, in their salvation; and *incessantly does he refresh them with the sweetest tokens of his love, and the most abundant communications of his joy*.

***~~Inferences—~~***

***~~1. How PATIENT should we be in all our tribulations!~~***

*Tribulation is but the way to our Father's house.*Could we repine at the difficulties of the way, if we only consider *where*it is leading us? Besides, while every trial brings us nearer to our journey's end, it leaves one trial less to be endured. "Be patient, then, and hope to the end."

***~~2. How EARNEST should we be to obtain a saving interest in Christ!~~***

Nothing but his blood can cleanse us from sin; nor can we ever be admitted to the marriage-supper without a wedding garment. Let us go then to the fountain; let us wash and be clean.

***~~3. How DILIGENT should we be in seeking Heaven!~~***

*Will not the blessedness of Heaven make amends for all the tribulations of earth?*Will it not be time enough to rest when we get thither? Let us then press forward with all our might!

#2511

***~~The Nearness of Eternity~~***

***~~[Revelation 10:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 10.5), [6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Revelation 10.6)~~***

The angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to Heaven, and swore by him that lives forever and ever.… that there should be time no longer.

NEVER was there a more beautiful instance of descriptive imagery than that before us.

In verse 1, a mighty angel (probably the Angel of the covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ) is represented as coming from Heaven to make known to the beloved Disciple the purposes and decrees of God. His *vesture*was a cloud, which intimated that "clouds and darkness being round about him," neither his person nor his message could be fully known.

His *face*shone as the brightness of the meridian sun, which denoted his transcendent excellency and glory.

A *rainbow*, intimating his faithfulness to all his covenant-engagements, encircled his head as a royal diadem.

His *feet*were as pillars of fire, marking at once his immoveable firmness, and irresistible power.

His *posture*was such as became his august appearance, and the solemn embassy on which he was come.

He set his feet, the one on the earth, and the other on the sea, *expressing thereby his sovereign dominion over the whole universe*.

In this situation he cried with a loud voice, like the roaring of a lion: upon which seven thunders, like a responsive echo, uttered their voices. The attention of the whole creation being thus deeply fixed, this glorious personage, in the manner of those who appeal to God, lifted up his hand, and swore by him who lives forever and ever, even by the Creator of Heaven and earth; and that which he thus solemnly affirmed with an oath, was that there should be time no longer.

Commentators understand this oath in different ways. Some think it relates to the introduction of the millennium; others to the commencement of the eternal state. The whole period fixed for the reign of antichrist was twelve hundred and sixty years, or, in the language of prophecy, "a time, and times, and half a time," and the oath declares, that the power of antichrist shall continue no longer than to that precise period; and that then the end of the world (as some think) or the happy state of the Church (which is the more probable opinion) shall succeed. But without entering into this question, the words, in whichever way they are understood, will furnish us with this important observation, that,

***~~I. Our times are in God's hands.~~***

That God has fixed the duration of the world itself, and the limits of every man's existence in it, is a truth so evident, that it is needless to dwell long upon the proof of it. But to get it suitably impressed upon our minds, is a work of great difficulty, and worthy of our united attention. To promote this end, let the following considerations be laid to heart:

***~~1. If God has fixed the period for our existence here, it is impossible for us to prolong it—~~***

No strength of constitution can withstand the stroke of death.

No physician's skill can administer either antidote or cure for death.

No friends or relatives can procure one moment's respite from death.

Nor shall any lack of preparation for eternity avail for the lengthening out of our appointed time here on earth.

If God has said, "This night shall your soul be required from you," even though we retired to our bed in perfect health, we should never behold the morning light.

***~~2. When the period fixed for our existence here shall arrive, there will be an end of all present things—~~***

All our earthly connections will be dissolved.

All our plans and purposes will be broken.

All our opportunities of spiritual improvement will forever cease.

***~~3. When the appointed moment shall come, our eternal state will be irrevocably fixed—~~***

There will be no change whatever in the grave.

Those who die without a saving interest in Christ will be forever miserable.

Those who have improved their time for the great ends and purposes of life, will be forever happy in the presence of their God—

***~~II. Reflections—~~***

***~~1. This very day or night may be our last—~~***

Yes, if the term of our continuance on earth be now to expire, we cannot resist the Divine will; we must depart. But where? Can it be to the regions of the damned? O how shall we dwell with everlasting burnings? *Have we warrant to hope that we should go to Heaven? Then welcome sickness! welcome death!* But let us not rest one moment while this awful matter is in suspense.

***~~2. Our last day must come soon, at all events—~~***

What if we live fifty or sixty years! The time will soon be gone, as a weaver's shuttle passing through the loom; and then the *thread of life*will be cut. Those who are now advanced in years look back upon their past life as a dream. So will it appear to us also, when it is spent. Let us then work while it is day; before the night comes, in which no man can work.

***~~3. The present moment is of infinite importance to us all—~~***

It is all that we can call our own—and on this eternity depends. Let us therefore live as those who live for eternity. If ever we should be with Christ in Paradise, shall we regret that we took so much pains to get thither? If, on the contrary, we should ever lift up our eyes in Hell, shall we not bewail the foolishness that brought us thither? Let us then awake from our slumbers; and labor, that, at whatever time our Lord may come, he may find us ready and watching.

#2512

***~~The Reign of Christ on Earth~~***

***~~[Revelation 11:15–17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 11.15â17)~~***

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in Heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.

WE read of our blessed Lord weeping over Jerusalem, in the contemplation of the guilt they had contracted by their misimprovement of his mercies, and the heavy judgments which were about to be inflicted on them. And, in truth, wherever we turn our eyes, whether towards the heathen or the Christian world, we see but too just occasion to weep over their unhappy state. It is almost impossible to behold the universal reign of sin and Satan, and not to participate the feelings of David, when he said, "Rivers of waters run down my eyes, because men keep not your law."

But it will not be always thus. There is a time coming, and, we hope, now near at hand, when the whole world shall be converted to the faith of Christ, and "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea." Of this period the Apostle speaks in my text. Respecting the sounding of the seven angels I forbear to speak, because of the obscurity in which the subject is involved. But of the universal establishment of the Redeemer's empire, and of the joy expressed among the heavenly hosts at the prospect of it, I may speak with certainty; because it is a subject so fully opened in the sacred writings, that we can entertain no doubt respecting it.

Let me then call your attention to,

***~~I. The approaching reign of Christ on earth—~~***

***~~The kingdoms of this world have hitherto been almost entirely under the dominion of the prince of darkness—~~***

Satan is called "the god of this world," because he has reduced the world to a state of entire subjection to himself. That wicked fiend beguiled our first parents in Paradise, and brought under his own tyrannic sway the whole of the human race. The effect produced by him on his vassals may be seen in the first-born child of man; who was a murderer, and slew his own brother solely from an envious hatred of his superior piety.

Some few, a little remnant, God has in every age delivered from his dominion; but, from the fall of Adam to the present hour, he has kept in bondage the great mass of mankind, and is therefore justly called "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in all the children of disobedience." Not that he has power to make men act contrary to their will. They have a corrupt nature; and he knows how to take advantage of their evil propensities, and to ensnare them with temptations suited to their corrupt appetites. His wiles and devices are inconceivably subtle: the demons also that are confederate with him are innumerable: and men are but too willing to comply with his solicitations: so that he takes them in his snares, and "leads them captive at his will."

He does not indeed impel every one to the same crimes. Some he instigates to fulfill the desires of the flesh; others to tread more nearly in his own steps, by gratifying the desires of the mind in the indulgence of pride, envy, malice, and other hateful passions; which are no less odious in the sight of God, than those lusts which assimilate us rather to the beasts. But, whatever diversity there may be in the outward conduct of mankind, all agree in this, they cast off the yoke of God, and walk after the imagination of their own evil hearts—

Such is the state of all the kingdoms of this world, as well of those which enjoy the light of revelation as those that are yet immersed in Pagan darkness.

***~~But they will in due season "become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ"—~~***

The prophets have fully declared this: "The God of Heaven will set up a kingdom," which shall not, like the kingdoms of this world, be destroyed, but shall be universal in its extent, and everlasting in its duration. To "the Son of man," the Lord Jesus Christ, shall this be committed; and "all people, nations, and languages shall serve him;" "all kings shall fall down before him," and "his enemies shall lick the dust." Not that he will interfere with the exercise of kingly power among the different potentates of the earth: for "his kingdom is not of this world," the seat of his empire is the heart: and there will he establish his throne; not by the sword of man, but by "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

Of what kind his dominion will be, we may form some judgment from what took place on the day of Pentecost. His word on that day was "living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," and thousands instantly fell before it. So, when the time shall have come for the full establishment of his kingdom, all opposition, whether of men or devils, shall fall, as Dagon before the ark, and "all nations shall be subdued to the obedience of faith." Then where sin and Satan have hitherto maintained an undisputed sway, the grace of God shall reign, and iniquity from thence-forth shall hide its face—

No sooner was this glorious event announced, than all the hosts of Heaven were moved to welcome it. Their thanksgivings will lead me to set before you,

***~~II. The joy expressed in Heaven at the prospect of it—~~***

Truly, the reign of Christ is a ground of joy, and may well be made so by all on earth, and by all in Heaven. Consider the effect of it,

***~~1. As it respects the honor of God—~~***

God is banished, if I may so say, from the very world which he has made; and the whole of the human race are up in arms against him. His authority is altogether despised. Let anyone attempt to impress on men the obedience which they owe to God, how will he be regarded? What will he meet with from every quarter, but ridicule and contempt?

I speak not of the liberty which by courtesy is allowed to ministers in the discharge of their public duty, but of expostulations or entreaties in social life: and who is there that knows not how such a liberty would be resented? Nor would it give offence only among the profligate and abandoned, but among the more moral and decent part of the community. Nothing more need be done than to exalt God's law as the rule of our conduct, and his authority as paramount to every other consideration, and it will soon be seen how entirely all subjection to him is cast off, and man is become a god unto himself.

The same effect will be produced if we speak of the love and mercy of our God. Let us declare to those around us what God has done for the redemption of a ruined world; let us invite them to believe in Christ, to apply to him for the gift of his Holy Spirit, to live in the continual exercise of prayer and praise; shall we be a whit more acceptable to carnal men, than when calling them to submit to the commands of God? No! the language of their hearts is, There is "no God" to control us; or, if there is, we will not submit to him: "We know not the Lord, neither will we obey his voice." And as for his Son, whom you represent as sent to gather in the fruits of his inheritance, they say, "let us cast him out," and live in the undisturbed enjoyment of our own hearts' lusts.

Now who that considers this must not blush, and be confounded for the indignities which are cast upon his God? How can we reflect upon it a moment, and not wonder that the whole earth is not swallowed up again with a universal deluge, or burnt up with fire as Sodom and Gomorrah?

But it is delightful to know that a period is coming, when "God will take to him his great power and reign," from one end of the earth even to the other. In this contemplation our minds find some relief. Our God shall not always be thus dishonored: his *authority*shall one day be universally acknowledged, and his *will*be universally obeyed. The mysteries of his love also shall be duly appreciated, and all the wonders of his grace be extolled on earth even as they are in Heaven. Well might the four and twenty elders, the representatives of the whole body of the redeemed, "fall down and worship God" in the prospect of this time, saying, "We give you thanks, O Lord God Almighty, because you have taken to you your great power, and have reigned!"

***~~2. As it respects the happiness of man—~~***

Were we to look only to the temporal happiness of man, we shall find it greatly enhanced by the diffusion of true religion in the world. For partly through the calamities to which we are unavoidably exposed, and partly through the evils which men, through the influence of their evil passions, inflict upon each other, this world is, more or less, to every man, a valley of tears. But religion induces such habits of mind as to dispose us to a universal exercise of love; while it affords such consolations as turn afflictions themselves into occasions of joy. In reference to *individuals*, it may be said that "instead of the thorn grows up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier grows up the myrtle-tree." In reference to *communities*, it may be said that the wolf is made to dwell with the lamb, and the leopard to lie down with the kid; nor will there be any to hurt or to destroy in all God's holy mountain.

Great as the change is in this respect, it is far more glorious in a *spiritual view*. Where is the man who knows anything of solid peace? He does not exist upon the face of the whole earth, except among the little remnant of God's redeemed people. Many possess what they call *peace*—that is, a mere thoughtlessness and indifference about the eternal world: but who derives joy from the contemplation of death and judgment? Who is "looking for, and hastening unto, the coming of the day of Christ," as the period for the completion and consummation of his bliss? Or who finds a real delight in God as his reconciled God and Father? This is the portion of those alone who have believed in Christ. They do possess it: they walk with God as his dear children: they maintain sweet fellowship with the Father and the Son: they live as on the borders of eternity, and enjoy already a foretaste of their heavenly inheritance. Of this indeed none can judge, but those who experience it in their souls: there is "a stone given to them with a new name upon it which they alone can read," but though the stranger intermeddles not with their joy, it is real, "unspeakable, and glorious."

For the full effect of the reign of Christ we must wait until we come into the eternal world. We must be added to the heavenly hosts before we can at all conceive of their bliss: but when exalted to a participation of their lot, we shall feel precisely as they do; and "fall on our faces before the throne of God," to adore him with all the blended emotions of humility and love. Where Christ is not known, the very superstitions of men impose on them such a yoke as makes life itself a burden. But wherever he reigns, "the wilderness blossoms as the rose," and earth becomes a nursery for Heaven.

***~~Let me now, in conclusion, address myself,~~***

***~~1. To those in whose hearts the kingdom of Christ has been established—~~***

Mark, I pray you, the conduct of those in Heaven. In the prospect of this glorious period, they, not on their own account, but on account of those who should hereafter participate their bliss, rose from their thrones whereon they were seated, and all with one accord fell upon their faces before God, the very instant that the glad tidings were proclaimed, and burst forth into the devoutest praises and thanksgivings to him on account of the blessings which were about to flow down on man, and the honor which would thereby accrue to God.

And will not you prostrate yourselves before him; you who are so deeply interested in this event, and who have through the sovereign grace of God been already made partakers of the benefit? I charge you, brethren, to cultivate this very spirit. This is what I wish to see in all the religious world: this is the true and proper effect of redeeming love upon the soul: and I call upon you all to make this improvement of it, and to *grow downward in humility, while you bring forth fruit upward to the praise and glory of your God.*

***~~2. To those who have never yet bowed to the scepter of his grace—~~***

Do you not know that this revolution which is to take place in the world at large, must take place in the heart of every individual; and that, until it is experienced by you, you are subjects and vassals of the prince of darkness? Know of a surety, that, if ever you would be acknowledged by Christ as his redeemed people, you must be "turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Yes indeed; you must submit to Christ; you must bow to the scepter of his grace, or be "broken in pieces as a potter's vessel." Remember what he has said respecting those who reject "his light and easy yoke." "Bring hither those that were my enemies, who would not have me reign over them, and slay them before me." My dear brethren, cast away the weapons of your rebellion before it be too late; and yield a willing obedience to your Savior now, that you may reign with him in glory forever and ever.

#2513

***~~HOW SATAN IS TO BE VANQUISHED~~***

***~~[Revelation 12:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 12.11)~~***

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb!

THE establishment of Christianity, whether in the world at large, or in the souls of individuals, is, by means of a warfare, carried on between "the god of this world," and the God of Heaven and earth. Such is the representation given of it in our text. "There was war in Heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in Heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. verses 7–9."

By this I understand, that while our blessed Lord sought, by means of faithful ministers and active saints, to establish his kingdom upon earth—the devil, through the agency of persecuting emperors, and idolatrous priests, and heathen philosophers, labored to the uttermost to counteract this gracious design. During the three first centuries the conflict was severe: but at last the Lord Jesus prevailed, so that Christianity, under Constantine, became established through the Roman empire, and idolatry was in a great measure destroyed.

"Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death!" [Revelation 12:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 12.10-11)

That is, this victory was gained, not by the sword, but by the faith of believers, the fidelity of ministers, and the constancy of all.

The words which we have taken for our consideration at this time belong more particularly to believers, who maintained their steadfastness, and were useful in the diffusion of the truth, by the simple exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They were accused before magistrates continually, through the influence of Satan; but "they overcame their great adversary by the blood of the Lamb."

Let us consider—

***~~I. The character of the adversary with whom we have to contend—~~***

He is called "the accuser of the brethren;" and this name justly belongs to him at the present day: for he accuses all the Lord's people,

***~~1. To God himself—~~***

We are told how repeatedly and how confidently he accused Job; [Job 1:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 1.9-11); [Job 2:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Job 2.4-5). And that, "when Joshua the high-priest stood before the angel of the Lord, Satan stood at his right hand to resist him. [Zechariah 3:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 3.1-2)." To the same effect, in the words immediately before our text, it is said, "He accused the saints before God day and night." How far that wicked fiend may be permitted to prosecute his impious course in the presence of the Most High, we will not undertake to say: but whatever efforts he made in former days, he uses still: and by whatever means he sought to injure the saints of old, he still has recourse to them for the purpose of affecting his murderous designs.

***~~2. To their fellow-men—~~***

Here we can speak without hesitation. We see how this deceiver accused God's people of old, to Artaxerxes, to prevent the re-building of the temple, [Ezra 4:12-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezra 4.12-16); and to Ahasuerus, in order to effect their utter destruction, [Esther 3:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Esther 3.8-9). In like manner he accused the Apostles as ring-leaders of sedition; and oven our Lord himself as a blasphemer and a demoniac, And what is there that he does not lay to the charge of the saints at this day? Through him they are still, exactly as they were in the apostolic age, "a sect that is everywhere spoken against. [Acts 28:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 28.22)."

Our blessed Lord taught us to expect that men would "speak all manner of evil against his followers falsely for his sake. [Matthew 5:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.11);" and so it is, and so it will be, as long as "the accuser of the brethren" retains his influence in the world.

***~~3. To themselves—~~***

Few, if any, of the Lord's people are altogether strangers to the wiles of Satan. Exceeding powerful are the suggestions whereby he tempts and harasses the souls of men. They are justly compared to "fiery darts," which penetrate the inmost soul, and which nothing but "the shield of faith can quench. [Ephesians 6:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.16)."

Sometimes he insinuates that we have committed the unpardonable sin, the sin against the Holy Spirit; and that we can therefore never be forgiven.

At other times he suggests that we are not of the number of God's elect; and that, consequently, it is in vain to seek his face.

At other times, he would make us believe, that we have sinned away our day of grace; and that therefore our state is remediless and hopeless.

Now though the world at large are "ignorant of these devices," the Lord's people know them by bitter experience. [2 Corinthians 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.11); and find, that, while this subtle enemy, by accusing them to others, creates to them many "fightings without," so by accusing them to themselves he generates many "fears within. [2 Corinthians 7:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 7.5)."

But, as formidable as this enemy is, my text informs us,

***~~II. By what means we may be sure to overcome him—~~***

Of the saints in glory we are told, that "they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb;" and we in like manner shall overcome him also, if we regard the blood of the Lamb,

***~~1. As the ground of our hopes—~~***

It is "the blood of the Lamb" which has procured our reconciliation with God: and if we are sprinkled with it, as the houses of the Israelites were sprinkled with the blood of the Paschal Lamb, no enemy whatever can prevail to hurt us. Thousands may fall beside us, and ten thousands at our right hand, but destruction can never come near us.

There is in that precious blood a sufficient atonement for the sin of the whole world; so that, if we had the sins of the whole world upon our own souls alone, we need not despair: we need only to plunge into "the fountain opened for sin and for impurity," and we shall be pure, even as an angel is pure; "our sins of scarlet or of crimson dye shall instantly become as wool, yes, and as white as snow itself!"

In vain will Satan then attempt to accuse us: for God, who sees our secret reliance on the blood of Christ, will "behold no iniquity in us;" and in vain will he attempt to distress our minds; for, "being justified by faith in that blood, we shall have peace with God," and peace in our own conscience. That plea, the death of Christ for us, will be sufficient to silence every accusation, and to defeat every assault of our great adversary.

***~~2. As the source of our strength—~~***

That precious blood has purchased for us all the blessings both of grace and glory; and relying on it, we may be assured that "our strength shall be according to our day."*What is there that God will not do for those who are reconciled to him through the sacrifice of his dear Son?*Will he not come down to them, and dwell in them, and be a Father unto them; and deal with them as sons?

But there is one promise which comprehends within it everything that our hearts can wish: "I will be a *God*unto them. [Hebrews 8:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 8.10)." Consider what is implied in this. If it had been said only, I will be a *friend*, or a *father*unto them, it would have been most encouraging; because it would have secured to us all that might reasonably be expected from persons standing in such relations to us. But, when it is said, "I will be a *God*unto them," it secures to us the exercise of *infinite wisdom, and almighty power, and goodness, and love*: and with these on our side, we may defy all the assaults whether of men or devils.

***~~3. As a stimulus to our exertions—~~***

Sweetly encouraging was the testimony given to Abel, when he offered a firstling of his flock to God; insomuch that Cain, who understood its import, was filled with rage at the distinguishing grace shown to his pious and believing brother. [Genesis 4:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 4.4-5). But the blood of Christ sprinkled on our souls "speaks infinitely better things to us. [Hebrews 12:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.24)."

Shall not his love in shedding it for us influence our minds? Shall it not "constrain us to live unto him who died for us and rose again? [2 Corinthians 5:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.14)." What will be able to stop us when impelled by gratitude to him? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No! in all these things we shall be more than conquerors through him that loved us. [Romans 8:35-36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.35-36). None of these things will move us: we shall "be ready not only to be bound, but also to die," for our adorable Benefactor; and shall never cease to fight against our adversary until he is overcome, and "bruised under our feet."

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

Seeing then that our victory over this great adversary is to be gained by the blood of the Lamb, let us exercise faith in that blood,

***~~1. With simplicity—~~***

This is the precise idea contained in our text. The redeemed overcame by a simple reliance on the blood of Christ as the only ground of their hopes. And in this we must resemble them. We must not blend anything else with this. We must not endure the thought of uniting any work of ours in any degree whatever with Christ's meritorious sufferings and death. We must make Him our only foundation, and glory in him alone.

***~~2. With boldness—~~***

It is added, that they overcame Satan by the word of their testimony. No doubt they all testified of Christ wherever they went: and by their testimony they prevailed on thousands to embrace the faith, and to burst the bonds in which they had been held. You are not all, it is true, called to be ministers of Christ, but you are all to be witnesses for him in the midst of a dark benighted world. With the heart you may believe unto righteousness; but with the mouth you must make confession unto salvation. By this you will give the death-wound to Satan: for let light only shine, and the kingdom of darkness will be utterly destroyed.

***~~3. With constancy—~~***

To the honor of the saints in glory it is recorded, that "they loved not their lives unto the death." This is the sure way to conquer. Jesus himself, "by death overcame him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;" and in the same way must we triumph also. If we would vanquish Satan in the world, or in our own hearts, it must be by showing that death has no sting for us; and that we can welcome it for Christ's sake. "Be then faithful unto death, and Christ will give you the crown of life!"

#2514

***~~THE LAMB SLAIN FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD~~***

***~~[Revelation 13:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 13.8)~~***

Whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

THE persons here spoken of are the saints, who have withstood, and are still withstanding, the corruptions of Popery, even unto martyrdom itself. There can be no doubt but that the Papal power is that which is here portrayed as exercising the most relentless tyranny over the Christian world, during the space of twelve hundred and sixty years. The multitudes that have been slain by that blaspheming and persecuting power are innumerable. For hundreds of years, that idolatrous Church, aided by the secular arm of its advocates and dependants, compelled all to "worship her;" those only excepted, "whose names had been written in the Lamb's book of life from the foundation of the world." Over these she could not prevail, because "they loved not their lives unto death;" but over all others she exercised the most despotic sway; and reduced them to a state of vassalage, more cruel and debasing than could ever have been contemplated, or even credited, if the voice of inspiration had not declared it, and the history of ages borne witness to it.

It is not however of Popery that I am about to speak, nor of those who are delivered from it; but rather of that *electing and redeeming love*by which they have been delivered, "their names having been written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

Let us consider these remarkable expressions: and let us mark,

***~~I. The designation here given to our blessed Lord—~~***

He is called "a Lamb," because he was destined to be a sacrifice for sin, like the lambs that were offered under the Mosaic law. And though he did not come into the world until the world had existed for four thousand years, yet is he said to have been "slain from the foundation of the world." And justly may he be spoken of under these terms: because, though not slain, in fact, until about thirty-four years after his incarnation, he was offered in sacrifice to God from the very beginning,**1.** In PURPOSE—

From all eternity was he devoted to God; and set apart for an offering, just as the Paschal Lamb was four days before it was actually slain. In all the prophecies, this was clearly shown. The very first promise that was given to man declared, that, in his conflicts with the powers of darkness, he himself would suffer, having "his heel bruised, while he bruised the serpent's head;" and "dying himself, while he overcame him who had the power of death, that is, the devil."

In the Psalms of David, all the circumstances of his death were predicted with a minuteness that bore the resemblance of historic record, rather than of a prophecy of what was afterwards to be accomplished. The Prophet Isaiah also, eight hundred years before the Savior's advent, was equally particular in his predictions respecting him; so that it is not possible to read his prophecies with candor, and retain a doubt of whom he spoke, or whose sufferings he foretold. At last the forerunner of our Lord pointed him out, as the very person so characterized and so predicted; saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!"

The *types*, also, bear the same testimony to Him from the beginning. There can be no doubt but that sacrifices were of divine appointment: for when Abel took of the firstlings of his flock to offer to the Lord, he did it "by faith." Now faith must, of necessity, have respect to a divine ordinance. If God had not previously ordained the offering of sacrifices, it would have been an act of presumption, and not of faith, in Abel so to approach the Deity. We are not, indeed, told when God instituted the use of *sacrifices*; but we conceive it to have been immediately after the fall, when he clothed our first parents with the skins of beasts, which, I think there can be no doubt, had been offered in sacrifice to him, by his own express appointment. In every successive age, the same *sacrifices*were offered by Noah and the Patriarchs, until the time of Moses, when they were made the constant means of shadowing forth the Savior, and of making known unto men the only way in which a sinner could find acceptance with God. They all shadowed forth the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Sacrifice that was in due time to be offered for the sins of the whole world.**2.** In EFFECT—

As God had ordained from all eternity the sacrifice of his dear Son, so he regarded it as if it had been actually offered; and imputed the merit of it to all who approached him in humility and faith. Doubtless our first parents, and Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and the Patriarchs, and all the saints that were saved during the first four thousand years, were "accepted in the Beloved," just as we are since his advent and crucifixion. "They all died in faith" of Him who was to come, as we die in the faith of Him who is already come. [Hebrews 11:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.13).

*There has been but one way of salvation from the beginning.*The Lord Jesus Christ ever was, and ever will be, "the way unto the Father; and no man ever did, or ever will, come unto the Father but by Him. [John 14:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.6)." It is in consequence of the reflex efficacy of his sacrifice, so to speak, that God's righteousness appears in the remission of sins *before*his advent, no less than in the forgiveness of them *since*his advent. "God having from the beginning set forth his Son to be an atoning sacrifice through faith in his blood, his righteousness in the remission of sins was, as Paul tells us, fully declared from the beginning, precisely as it is at this very hour. [Romans 3:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.25-26)."

*While we look thus to the death of Christ as the meritorious ground of our acceptance with God, we must trace altogether to the electing love of God*.

***~~II. The security of those who believe in him—~~***

There is "a book," in which the names of all God's people are registered, and have been registered "from the foundation of the world. The last clause of the text may, with equal propriety, be connected with "The Book Written," or "The Lamb Slain." This book is called "The Lamb's book of life. [Revelation 21:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.27)."

"There is, and ever has been, a remnant according to the election of grace. [Romans 11:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.5)." *These were given by the Father to the Lord Jesus Christ*. This is again, and again, and again mentioned in Christ's intercessory prayer: John 17, that they might be a peculiar people to him, and that in them "he might see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." They were "*chosen*by the Father," and "predestined" unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, that they might be to the praise of the glory of his grace, who has made them accepted in the Beloved. [Ephesians 1:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.4-6)." In due time "they are *called*by God with a holy calling; but still, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began. [2 Timothy 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Tim 1.9)."

*All who are inscribed in this book shall surely attain eternal life*—

This is clearly intimated in my text, as the source of steadfastness to those who had not worshiped the beast: but in many other places it is directly affirmed; yes, and the veracity of God is pledged for the performance of the promise which such an inscription implies. Remarkable is that expression of Paul to Titus, when, speaking of himself, he says, "In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began. [Titus 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Titus 1.2)." Here he not only traces up the promise of life altogether to the sovereign grace of God, but represents the veracity of God as pledged for the accomplishment of it. In another place he sets forth the promise of God as "confirmed by an oath, in order to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, and to give the stronger consolation to those who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them [Hebrews 6:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 6.17-18).

In fact, there is *a golden chain of Divine purposes*, reaching from eternity to eternity: "for whom he did foreknow, he also did predestine to be conformed to the image of his Son: and whom he did predestine, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. [Romans 8:29-30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.29-30)." In fact, God upholds all his people in his arms, and "allows none to pluck them out of his hands. [John 10:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.28-29)," and "keeps them, by his own power, through faith unto salvation. [1 Peter 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.5)." "The same hand that has laid the foundation of grace in their souls, will also finish the structure. [Zechariah. 4:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech. 4.9);" and "He who has been the author of good to them, will also be the finisher. [Hebrews 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.2)."

Learn then, from hence,

***~~How greatly we are indebted to our God—~~***

If we are saints indeed, "our names are written in the book of life. [Philippians. 4:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil. 4.3)," and have been "written in it from the foundation of the world. [Revelation 17:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 17.8)." What ground, then, is there to any one for self-applause? We acknowledge that there is a difference between you and others; and you are not serving the world, and the flesh, and the devil, as millions of your fellow-creatures are. But *who made you to differ?*What had you done, to deserve the distinction of having your names written in the book of life? The change that has taken place in you was not the source, but the fruit and consequence of that mercy which God, of his own sovereign grace, conferred upon you. Rejoice, then, in that inestimable benefit, and in that God who so freely bestowed it on you. There is nothing under Heaven that calls for so much gratitude at your hands. [Luke 10:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 10.20); and therefore I call upon you to bless and magnify your God with your whole hearts.***2.****What reason we all have for humiliation and contrition—*

I will not speak of any gross sin as committed by us: I will notice only our ingratitude to God for his electing and redeeming love. Think of the Savior setting himself apart from all eternity to be slain for you. Think of God the Father setting his love upon you from all eternity, and writing your unworthy name in the book of life. And then think what provocation you have given him "to blot it out again. [Revelation 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 3.5); and yet he has borne with you to the present moment, in order that you might not come short of the glory reserved for you.

Say, whether, in the review of these things, you ought not to stand amazed; yes, and to blush and be confounded in the presence of your God? Truly, it is not possible for us ever to lie too low before our God: and to all eternity must we fall on our faces before the throne, while, with all the glorified saints and angels, we unite in singing praises to God and to the Lamb.

#2515

***~~THE FELICITY OF HEAVEN~~***

**[Revelation 14:1-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 14.1-5)**

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from Heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being first-fruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

A CONSIDERABLE part of the Book of Revelation is yet involved in impenetrable obscurity; though we doubt not but that *when the predictions contained in it shall have been fulfilled, then the whole will appear as lucid and intelligible as any other prophecies which have been already accomplished*. There are parts however which may be understood by every reader; and which are particularly interesting, on account of the sublime views which they unfold to us of the heavenly state. Indeed in the whole of the inspired volume there will not be found such bright displays of Heaven as in this closing part of the sacred canon. The veil seems on many occasions to be drawn aside, as it were, and we are admitted to see and hear all that is taking place in the regions of bliss.

The passage before us is of this kind. The Apostle himself was, as it were, caught up into the third heavens, where he saw his adorable Lord and Savior in the midst of all his redeemed people, and heard the songs with which they proclaimed his praise. His record concerning it will lead me to set before you,

***~~I. The blessedness of Heaven—~~***

There the Lord Jesus Christ dwells in the midst of his redeemed people—

Heaven doubtless was the place now opened in vision to the Apostle's view: it was "Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. [Hebrews 12:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.22)."

There the Lord Jesus Christ dwells, still retaining in his person all those marks which his murderous enemies inflicted on his sacred body, when he offered himself a sacrifice for the sins of a ruined world. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and in that sublime character does he yet appear, though seated on his heavenly throne: for in that character he is most glorified in himself, and most endeared to his redeemed people.

Around him stand the myriads of his redeemed people. They are called "an hundred and forty and four thousand, "every tribe of Israel having twelve thousand of its members "sealed in their foreheads" as God's peculiar property. [Revelation 7:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 7.4), and "having the Father's name engraved there" as an evidence of their relation to him.

But we are not to suppose that there are no more in Heaven than the number specified: for they are in reality "a multitude that no man can number, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. [Revelation 7:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 7.9)."

There are they adoring him with unceasing songs of praise—

The song in which they join, though not specified here, is made known to us in a former chapter. It is "a new song;" because it was unknown to the bright morning stars which were first created, nor could possibly be sung by those who never fell. Hence it is said to be "a song which no man could learn, except those who had been redeemed from the earth." Hear the song itself, as reported to us by him who heard it: "They sang a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for you were slain, and have redeemed us to God by your blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and have made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on earth." He then adds, "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels, round about the throne and the beasts and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. [Revelation 5:9-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 5.9-12)."

Here are two things to be noticed; one is, that the song was *new*; for it could not be sung until the Lamb was slain; and the other is, that *the angels are unable to join in the song of the redeemed*; for while the redeemed celebrate his praises as having been "slain for them, and having redeemed them to God by his blood," the angels can only join so far as to acknowledge, that He is "worthy to receive" the praises that are so offered to him.

This chorus of the redeemed, swelled as it is by the acclamations and amens of all the angelic hosts. [Revelation 5:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 5.13-14), is "as the sound of many waters, and loud as thunder itself;" yet is the song so melodious, that every one of the redeemed accompanies it with his harp; for it is "the voice of harpers harping with their harps." The music of the temple-service in the days of Solomon must have been grand beyond all that men of this age can conceive: but not Solomon in all his glory could form a conception of that melody which John heard, and which, I pray God, *we*may be admitted to hear, and join in, to all eternity.

It is said of all this band, that "they follow the Lamb wherever he goes." *While they were in this world, they endeavored to walk in his steps, and to follow him in all his ways*; and now they attend upon him through the boundless expanse of Heaven, all vying, as it were, with each other in testifying their love and gratitude to their adorable Redeemer. As in the days of old, at the time of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, "the whole multitude followed him, crying, Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. [Matthew 21:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 21.9);" so now in Heaven they follow him with similar acclamations, and rest not day nor night from this glorious employment. [Revelation 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 4.8).

Such are the circumstances related by the Apostle: but, *to form any idea of the bliss enjoyed by the heavenly hosts, we must ourselves be partakers of it: the language of mortality cannot paint it; nor, if an angel were to come from Heaven to describe it, could our feeble apprehensions grasp the mighty theme*.

In relation to this blessedness, the point which more particularly demands our attention is,

***~~II. The character of those that are admitted to it—~~***

This is minutely marked,

***~~1. In its SOURCE—~~***

"They have been redeemed from among men." Once they were in bondage even as other men: but God in his mercy delivered them "by a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm." Israel when in Egypt were an exact picture of them in their unregenerate state. Their subjection to sin and Satan was entire: nor could they by any means cast off the yoke with which they were bound. But *God, in his tender mercy, pitied them; and sent his only dear Son to redeem them; to redeem them, by offering his own soul a ransom for them*, and by enabling everyone of them to burst his bonds. Thus to God's sovereign love and mercy must their emancipation be traced in the first instance, and then to the efficacy of the Redeemer's blood, and the almighty power of his grace.

As Israel was "a nation taken out from the midst of another nation for the praise of the glory of his grace," so are all that either are, or shall be, transferred to the heavenly Canaan, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that they may show forth the praises of him that has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light. [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.9)."

***~~2. In its PROGRESS—~~***

"They are a willing people, though made so in the day of God's power. [Psalm 110:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 110.3);" and *the very instant that they begin to taste redeeming love, and to experience the mighty working of God's power on their souls, they offer themselves up to God "as first-fruits to God and to the Lamb*." The first-fruits of everything were God's peculiar portion: nor could any man appropriate them to his own use without being guilty of sacrilege. And such are all who are truly converted unto God. [James 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 1.18). Under this character then they present themselves to him: they know that "they are not their own, but his: and therefore they desire to glorify him with their bodies and their spirits, which are his. [1 Corinthians 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.20)." They account this "a reasonable service. [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1);" and they engage in it with their whole hearts.

Having consecrated themselves to God, they endeavor to be faithful to their engagements. This is what is meant, when it is said in my text, "They were not defiled with women; for they are virgins." It is of *spiritual fornication*that the Apostle speaks. This is a common figure in the Holy Scriptures. Men are often said to "go a whoring after their idols." But *the saints in glory have kept themselves from spiritual, as well as from open and outward, idolatry. They have given up themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, as a virgin betroths herself to her husband*. 2 Corinthians 11:2; and they have "kept themselves pure;" not transferring to any rival the regards which are due to God alone.

*Nor is it from overt acts only that they have abstained, but from unfaithfulness even of thought or desire*. They know that God requires the heart: and that the smallest alienation of the affections from him would excite his just resentment. They have therefore labored to be sincere and without offence before him: and through the grace and mercy of their God "they have been preserved blameless. Jude verse 24;" so that "in their mouth there was no deceit; and they are found without fault before the throne of God."

Here you see the whole Christian life depicted; and the process by which every saint in glory is fitted for his place. *The whole work of grace originates with God, and is carried on by God to its final outcome.*But man is neither an unwilling nor inactive servant in the house of his God. He is aware that he must be fit for the inheritance of Heaven before he can possibly enjoy it. This fitness therefore he aspires after, and labors for with all his might: and, through the operation of God's grace upon his soul, he is fully prepared for glory, being transformed into the Divine image, an *Israelite indeed*, in whom there is no deceit.

***~~Permit me now to address you all,~~***

***~~1. As candidates for Heaven—~~***

Men who are candidates for earthly honors find that much labor is necessary for the attainment of their object. Be assured then, brethren: *notwithstanding that Heaven is a free gift of God for Christ's sake, yet must it be labored for as much as if it were altogether the fruit of our own exertions*: as it is said, "Labor not for the food that perishes, but for that which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man will give unto you."

Permit me to ask*, Is it not worth a whole life of most strenuous exertion?*Consider only the representation that has been given of it: is it not desirable to be of that happy number, who are following the Lamb through all the courts of Heaven, and with voice and harp ascribing to him all possible glory and praise?

*Think of the alternative: think, if you are not admitted there, where will you be, and be to all eternity!*There is no middle place between Heaven and Hell. The idea of purgatory is a mere Popish delusion. As, if you have not the mark of Jehovah's name upon your forehead, you must bear the stamp of Satan's children; so *if you are not made partakers of the glories of Heaven, you must forever participate in the miseries of Hell*. See what is spoken but a few verses after my text. "If any man worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation: and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night."

Now though this is spoken primarily of those who enter into the abominations of popery, and bear on their forehead or on their hand the mark of that idolatrous Church, it is true also of all who die in their sins: the people that are not admitted to the marriage-supper of the Lamb, are "cast out into outer darkness, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth forever."

Compare now these states: both those in Heaven and those in Hell are "in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb;" but *the one, as the monuments of mercy, and joint-heirs of glory; the other, as monuments of divine vengeance, and heirs of wrath and fiery indignation*.

Need I then say to you, be diligent to make your calling and election sure? I pray you, consider how many there are who fall short of this inheritance. Of all that came out of Egypt, only two entered the promised land: and the perishing of all the rest in the Wilderness is set forth as an admonition to you, lest you also come short of the promised rest. [1 Corinthians 10:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 10.1-6) with [Hebrews 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 3.17) to [Hebrews 4:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 4.1). I cannot then be too urgent with you on this important subject. I would have you all to succeed in this great enterprise, and so to approve yourselves to your Savior now, that you may be counted worthy to dwell with him in a better world.

***~~2. As expectants of Heaven—~~***

*It is strange that everyone conceives Heaven to be his portion, though he never in the whole course of his life made one effort to obtain it.*But, beloved brethren, you have already heard the *character*of those who are in Heaven; and that to those only will Heaven be assigned. Inquire then whether you have attained this character? What have you experienced of that great work, the work of redemption? Have you been delivered from the yoke of sin and Satan? Have you been brought out from an ungodly world, as the Israelites were from Egypt; and are you living like them under the guidance and government of Jehovah? Does your conscience bear witness for you, that you have presented yourselves to him as the first-fruits, desiring to be wholly and altogether his? When have you so surrendered up yourselves to him?

Do not imagine that your dedication to him in baptism, or in any other public ordinance, is any evidence of your having personally fulfilled this duty, unless you are yet in the habit of renewing that dedication of yourselves to him in secret from day to day. And, supposing that you have given yourselves to him, have you been *faithful*to your engagements, so that in the last day, when the time for your everlasting union with the heavenly Bridegroom shall come, we may "present you as a chaste virgin to Christ?"

Have the world and the flesh so far lost their ascendancy over you, that you no longer comply with their solicitations, or yield to their temptations?

Finally, Can the heart-searching God attest that, as far as respects any *willful*sin, you are blameless and harmless, and shining as lights in the midst of a dark world?

These things are indispensably necessary to any well-grounded expectation of heavenly glory: and if, while destitute of these essential marks, you buoy up yourselves with the hopes of Heaven, you do but *deceive your own souls to your eternal ruin*.

I even appeal to yourselves: would you who have never touched a harp be able at a moment to accompany with it a band of music, and to join harmoniously in the sublimest strains? How then shall you, if undisciplined and unprepared, accompany the heavenly hosts in all their songs of praise? Their song, as you have before heard, is one which none but the sealed can learn: and were you admitted there in an unconverted state, your harp would yield nothing but discordant sounds, nor would a single note of your voice be in unison with the heavenly choir.

But I would hope and trust, that there are many here who on good grounds are expecting a portion among the saints in light. To such then I would say, "Press forward, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forward to that which is ahead."

And, if at any time the thought occur to your mind, Can such a sinner as *I* be saved? then look into Heaven, and see who there are already around the throne: do you not see there a Manasseh, a Mary Magdalen, a dying thief, and a whole host from the Church at *Corinth*. [1 Corinthians 6:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.10-11). Then there can be no reason for you, or any other person, to despond of being saved. Only seek to be interested in the redemption that Christ has wrought out for you, and everything else will follow. Through him you shall be justified; through him you shall be sanctified; "through him you shall be presented unto God without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, yes, as holy and without blemish;" for to all who seek acceptance through him, "he is made of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

#2516

***~~THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO ALL NATIONS~~***

***~~[Revelation 14:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 14.6-7)~~***

I saw another angel fly in the midst of Heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto those who dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice: Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment has come!

ON many occasions we find angels employed by God to execute his purposes respecting men. Sometimes they have been sent as executioners of his judgments; but most generally as dispensers of some special mercy; for their more appropriate office is as "ministering spirits, to minister unto the heirs of salvation."

In the passage before us an angel is sent, not to an individual, or a family, or a single nation, but to the whole world; having received a commission to "preach the everlasting Gospel to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people upon the face of the whole earth." His mode of executing this commission also is made known to us; and the whole account will afford us very valuable instruction, while we consider,

***~~I. His commission—~~***

It is here manifestly intimated,

***~~1. That the whole world needs to have the Gospel preached to them—~~***

We are apt to imagine that every man may be saved by the religion which he professes: and to intimate the contrary is deemed a libel even upon the Deity himself. But on this subject we can know nothing except as we are informed by God himself: and we must not set up our opinions in opposition to his revealed will. We must receive with implicit faith the declarations of his word; and *whether they accord with our preconceived views or not, we must rest satisfied that the Judge of all the earth will do right*. "The secret things belong to him; and the things which are revealed belong to us and to our children;" and the uniform testimony of revelation is, that men are all in a lost and perishing condition; that they all need a Savior; and that "there is no other name given under Heaven whereby any man can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ."

This then is the testimony which we must bear, without presuming to be "wise above that which is written." Indeed the very circumstance of an angel being employed to preach the Gospel to the whole world, is itself a proof that the whole world needs to be instructed in it in order to their final salvation; for we cannot suppose that God would use such means for the information of the world, if the information itself were not greatly needed. We shall do well therefore to fix this as a settled principle in our minds, that as Christ has offered himself "an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world," the whole world needs to be directed to him as the only ground of a sinner's hope.

***~~2. That the office of a preacher is one which even an angel from Heaven may well affect—~~***

Do you think that this angel counted his office an indignity? or that he regretted even his absence from the throne of God, while he was occupied in the discharge of it? Surely not! a regard for God's honor and for the welfare of mankind would carry him forward with exquisite delight, while flying through the vast expanse of Heaven. And let me say, that the office, by whoever discharged, if executed with fidelity and zeal—is as honorable as any that can be sustained on earth.

We justly account it a great honor to be an *ambassador*from an earthly monarch, and especially if for the purpose of effecting peace between contending nations. But how infinitely more honorable is it to be an ambassador from the court of Heaven, and a representative of the King of kings, to *proclaim to a rebellious world the terms on which they shall be restored to his favor, and receive all the benefits which Omnipotence itself can confer upon them!*Let none then think lightly of this office; let none imagine that talents of the most distinguished kind can be employed in any service more worthy of them, or that in any line whatever the most strenuous exertions can be more richly recompensed: for if a preacher is made an instrument of saving only one single soul, he has already gained that which is of more value than the whole world!

Let us now turn our attention to,

***~~II. His execution of the commission—~~***

There are many who imagine that the Gospel consists merely in an exhibition of Christ as crucified for the sins of men. That this is the point to which all must lead, I readily acknowledge: but it is *necessary that men should be awakened to a sense of their guilt and danger, in order to prepare their minds for a due reception of the Gospel salvation*: "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick;" and, *unless people feel their malady, it is in vain to speak to them of a remedy suited to it.*

The true mode of preaching the Gospel may be learned from the angel, in our text, who first calls men to a state of humiliation on account of sin; then exhorts them to embrace the salvation offered them in the Gospel; and then enforces his exhortation with a consideration calculated to stimulate them to the utmost care and diligence.

***~~1. He calls men to a state of humiliation, on account of sin—~~***

The whole world are asleep, or rather "dead, in trespasses and sins." All *fear*of God, yes, all *thought*of God, is cast off! And *men are as unmindful of their accountableness to him as if there were no God in Heaven*. To awaken them from their slumber, he opens his commission, by saying, and "saying with a loud voice," "Fear God!" And in like manner would I "lift up my voice like a trumpet," yes, if I could speak, as the angel himself, like thunder, it would be no more than the occasion calls for, if perhaps I might awaken one single soul to a consideration of his lost estate.

I say to you all then, "FEAR GOD!" whatever be your age, whatever your condition, whether you be old or young, or rich or poor, I say to every one of you individually as well as collectively, "Fear God!" for he is "a great God, and of awesome majesty;" and you have greatly offended him, and are obnoxious to his everlasting displeasure.

In the view of this, even a heathen monarch issued "a decree that every man in his wide-extended dominions should tremble and fear before the God of Heaven. [Daniel 6:25-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 6.25-26)." And well may this be inculcated on every human being: for "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!"

The inculcating of this too is a very essential part of the Gospel: for so was the Gospel ministered by the forerunner of our Lord, and by our Lord himself, and by all his holy Apostles: they all preached "repentance towards God" as preparatory to "faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. [Mark 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 1.4); [Mark 1:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 1.14-15); [Luke 24:47](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 24.47); [Acts 20:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.21)." *He neglects a very essential part of his duty who does not make repentance a preliminary requisite to a due reception of the Gospel salvation*.

***~~2. He exhorts them to embrace the salvation offered to them in the Gospel—~~***

God has in his tender mercy sent his only dear Son to die for our redemption; and has told us, that through him he will be reconciled unto us, and that all who believe in him shall be justified from all things. This Gospel then we should receive with the profoundest reverence, and the most lively gratitude. In so doing we "give glory" to all his glorious perfections. We glorify his *wisdom*and *goodness*, which have devised such a plan for the salvation of a ruined world. We glorify his *love*and *mercy*, in accepting it. We glorify his *truth*and *faithfulness*, in expecting the accomplishment of his promises in the appointed way.

It is said of Abraham, that when a child was promised to him in his old age, he "staggered not at the promises of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." Believe then, brethren, that this way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer is both suited to your wants, and sufficient for your necessities. Believe that, if you "look unto Jesus, you shall be saved;" and that "those who come unto him he will never cast out." Do not dishonor him by any doubts either of his *ability*or *willingness*to save you. Do not for a moment assign limits to the mercy of your God, or to the power of Christ, who is "able to save you to the uttermost." If I may use such an expression: take God at his word; embrace his promises; rely upon them; plead them in prayer; expect the accomplishment of them to your souls: and know that sooner shall "Heaven and earth pass away, than one jot or one tittle of his word shall fail."

***~~3. He enforces his exhortation with a consideration calculated to stimulate them to the utmost care and diligence—~~***

It is probable that there is some reference here to the judgments which will be inflicted on the anti-Christian powers—to make way for the more rapid diffusion of the Gospel. But that will be only a prelude, as it were, to *the general judgment, when all the enemies of the Lord and of his Christ shall be finally destroyed*.

Of that period the Apostles often speak, with the intention to detach our minds from present things, and to quicken us in our spiritual course. So strongly did the Apostle insist upon this thought, that he judged it necessary afterwards to remove from his Thessalonian converts the erroneous impression, which, by the strength of his own representations, he had made upon their minds.

Eighteen centuries have elapsed since that time; and consequently the destined period must be so much nearer its arrival. But, whether it is in itself near at hand or not, it is as it respects us; because at the instant of our death all opportunity for repentance or faith is forever closed. Can you think of this then, and delay this necessary work? What would not millions, who are gone into the eternal world, give for one single day to work out their salvation, if by any means it might be obtained? I pray you, lose not the present hour; but "today, while it is called today," humble yourselves before God in dust and ashes, and embrace with all earnestness the salvation he has given you in the Gospel of his Son.

***~~Let me now yet further improve the subject,~~***

***~~1. In reference to yourselves—~~***

You generally acknowledge that the Gospel should be carried to heathen nations. But do not you yourselves need it as much as they? True, you are in some measure acquainted with the scheme of salvation; but to what purpose is it that you have a *speculative knowledge*of the Gospel, if you have not an *experimental acquaintance*with it in your souls? Let me then follow in the train of that divine messenger, and repeat to you his authoritative admonitions: "Fear God!" "Give glory to him!" Reflect how soon the hour of his judgment will have come, when all possibility of securing this salvation will be forever terminated.

Despise not his message, because it is delivered by a worm like unto yourselves; for the word, however weakly delivered, is God's, and not mine. Therefore I beseech you to "receive it with meekness as an engrafted word, able to save your souls."

***~~2. In reference to the general subject of missions—~~***

What can we need to recommend the office of a missionary, when we see it executed by an angel from Heaven? Suppose he had been commissioned to inquire for an assistant—then who among us would not have volunteered his services? Or, if he had felt the need of financial aid—then who would not gladly have contributed to the utmost of his power? Methinks, the society now established in our Church, in concurrence with other societies of a similar nature, is that angel from Heaven: and the voice of that society, like that of Jehovah himself, is, "Who will go for us?" Are there not then many among you ready to say, "Here am I; send me!"

Would to God I could see such a zeal in the midst of you! Would to God that you were all like that blessed angel, ready to deny yourselves, and make every sacrifice for the honor of your God! In the early ages of Christianity such a zeal was common; insomuch that the knowledge of Christ was in the space of thirty or forty years diffused through all the Roman empire. But now for these seventeen hundred years how little has been done towards the evangelizing of the world! *Alas! not one sixth of the world knows so much as even the name of Christ*; and of them, a very, very small portion, it is to be feared, knows him to any good effect. I call upon you then to awake from the lethargy in which you have lain, and, by redoubled exertions, to redeem the time that has been lost, and the character of the Church to which you belong. The time for us to work is surely come; and if we enter into the sacred cause with suitable affection, we shall at least have the happiness of sowing what, at a future period, we may expect to produce an abundant harvest.

#2517

***~~THE PUNISHMENT OF THE UNGODLY~~***

***~~[Revelation 14:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 14.9-11)~~***

And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.

MINISTERS, who wish to discharge their duty conscientiously both to God and man, are placed in a very painful dilemma: if they declare faithfully the whole counsel of God, they are considered as harsh and severe: if, on the contrary, they keep back the more offensive truths, they contract a solemn responsibility before God, to whom they must give an account of every soul that has perished through their unfaithfulness.

What then are we to do? If the forbearing to alarm the consciences of our auditors would be attended with no evil consequences to them, we might perhaps run the risk of displeasing God ourselves, rather than excite in them any unnecessary disquietude; but when the loss of their souls, and of our own, must infallibly result from such timidity, we feel a necessity laid upon us, and can no longer forbear.

Yet, why need we apologize for delivering to men the message which God has sent them? Did not an angel deliver it, when first it was announced? and did he not deliver it with a loud voice, as feeling its importance, and determined, if possible, to arrest the attention of all the world? Let us then be pardoned for treading in the footsteps of an angel, and for seeking, in the way that he adopted, the welfare of your souls.

In the words before us there are two things which we shall endeavor to point out:

***~~I. Who they are against whom God here denounces his judgments—~~***

All Protestant writers are agreed, that "the beast" here mentioned, and more fully treated of in the preceding chapter, is the Papal Hierarchy. The Romish Church, from the time that it attained a sovereignty over other Churches, has been an idolatrous, superstitious, persecuting power.

It has been *idolatrous*, in that it worships saints and images, and the consecrated wafer; and blasphemously ascribes to its supreme head the titles and prerogatives of God himself.

It is *superstitious*, in that it substitutes penances, and pilgrimages, and other ordinances of man's device, in the place of Christ, our only Advocate and Atoning sacrifice.

And it is *persecuting*, insomuch that the cruelties exercised by Pagans themselves against the primitive Christians, do not exceed those which she has committed against those who have asserted their Christian liberty, and refused to comply with her abominations. But as, on the one hand, we cannot suppose that all the members of that Church shall perish; (for God will discriminate between those who serve him to the best of their knowledge, and those who, with high pretenses to piety, are enemies to all that is good;) so, on the other hand, all who drink into the spirit of that Church, or, in the language of our text, "receive the mark of the beast in their forehead or their hand," will certainly be found among those who shall endure the judgments here denounced against them. Among these therefore we must specify,

***~~1. The adherents of idolatry—~~***

We do not worship saints or images: true; but are there none who arrogate to themselves an authority in opposition to that of God, or who yield to such authority in points directly contrary to God's commands? What is this, but to usurp, or acknowledge, a power superior to God; or, in the language of the Apostle, "to worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for evermore. [Romans 1:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.25)." We do not mean to magnify every instance of wilfulness into an act of idolatry: but, where it is habitually exercised, or submitted to, in opposition to God's will, there is, in fact, a power elevated above that of God himself: and whether God will resent such usurpation, you yourselves may judge.

***~~2. The advocates for superstition—~~***

Superstition is not confined to penances and pilgrimages: it exists wherever there is a substitution made of any human observances in the place of our Redeemer's sacrifice. Some things may be more palpably absurd than others; but whether we seek to establish a righteousness of our own, by counting beads and repeating the Lord's prayer, or by a certain round of religious duties, we equally invalidate the Gospel, and make void the death of Christ. [Galatians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.2); [Galatians 5:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 5.4).

In fact, this, more than anything else, was the ground of separation from the Church of Rome. As much as transubstantiation and the infallibility of the Pope were objected to, it was the doctrine of *human merit*that most of all kindled the zeal of the Reformers, and stimulated them to protest against such fatal errors: and in proportion as we entertain hopes of meriting salvation by any works of our own, we return to Popery, and cherish the most damning corruption of "the beast."

**3.** The abettors of *persecution*—

It is a strange idea entertained by some, that persecution for the Gospel's sake has ceased. But if fires be not now kindled for the extirpation of pretended heretics, is therefore persecution ceased? Are there no such things as "cruel mockings" yet in existence? Yes, where is the person who is at all active in the cause of Christ, who is not despised and hated on that very account? Let him possess every qualification that can entitle him to respect, that one fault of loving and serving the Lord Jesus Christ, is sufficient to despoil him of all, and to render him an object of derision.

Nor is it to any abhorrence of persecution that we are indebted for the measure of peace that we enjoy, but to the laws, and the knowledge which men possess on the subject of religious toleration. The same spirit that has "made war with the saints" in the Romish Church, still exists in ours: and inasmuch as it does so, we "bear the image of the beast" in our forehead, and are in danger of the judgments which are treasured up for it.

Having ascertained the characters here spoken of, let us inquire into,

***~~II. Their doom—~~***

Whether the metaphors that are used to describe the punishment of the ungodly are to be understood in anything like a literal sense, we will not pretend to determine: nor is it of any importance to us to know: for, though there should be no lake of fire and brimstone to torment our bodies, yet will there be torment of some kind or other both to our bodies and souls; and that torment cannot be more fitly represented to us in our present state, than by the images used in our text. We can form some little idea of the internal agony arising from the drinking of a cup composed of burning ingredients; and of the outward agony which we should experience in being burnt alive: and therefore God is pleased to represent his judgments by these images.

And, O! what a terrible idea is that of a cup filled with the wrath and indignation of an incensed God; and that of a lake of fire and brimstone, "kindled to the highest degree of fury by the breath of the Almighty. [Isaiah 30:33](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.33)." But not to dwell on these metaphors, let us descend to those plainer matters which characterize the misery of the damned. It will be,

***~~1. UNALLEVIATED—~~***

Here, in our deepest troubles, we find something to mitigate our grief, some mixture of sweet in our cup of bitterness. There is some occupation to amuse us, some thought to sooth us, some friend to console us. But in that world of misery, our cup is "without the smallest mixture" of anything to assuage our anguish; no engagement to draw away our attention; nothing in the retrospect or prospect to afford us the smallest consolation. Here on earth we have "mercy and judgment;" there we shall have "judgment without mercy." As small as a drop of water would be to one burning in a lake of fire, it cannot there be granted to us. [Luke 16:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 16.24).

***~~2. INCESSANT—~~***

Whatever our afflictions are, whether of mind, or body, or of both together, the very weakness of our frame procures us some respite; and the overwhelming nature of our troubles leads to an occasional suspension of them. But in the future state of our existence, our bodies and souls will be strengthened on purpose that they may be capable of suffering incessant torture. The unhappy sufferers never close their eyes to sleep; they "rest not day nor night;" they are always "weeping, always wailing, always gnashing their teeth" with inexpressible anguish.

***~~3. UNPITIED—~~***

The sons and daughters of affliction find in this world some benevolent person ready to compassionate their state at least, if they be not able to relieve their misery. But those who are suffering the wrath of God, though tormented in the "presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb," find no pity whatever. Those benevolent spirits, who once would gladly have ministered to them with the tenderest solicitude, now hear their cries, and behold their writhings, without any other emotion than that of acquiescence and perfect approbation. Yes, they themselves are willing instruments of their torture; "gathering them together as tares, and binding them up in bundles, and casting them into the fire. [Matthew 13:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.30); [Matthew 13:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.39); [Matthew 13:41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 13.41)."

The Lord Jesus too, who once left the bosom of his Father for them, and assumed their nature, and groaned, and wept, and bled for them, and would have accounted all the travail of his soul richly recompensed, if they had but availed themselves of his offered mercy, even He now beholds them, and, so far from pitying their misery, "laughs at their calamity, and mocks now that his judgments are come upon them. [Proverbs 1:24-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Prov 1.24-26);" he even finds "rest and comfort to his own soul from the vengeance that he inflicts upon them. [Ezekiel 5:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 5.13)."

And there is reason to believe that every created being, not excepting the dearest relatives of those who perish, will be like-minded with Christ and the holy angels, and will applaud, and even rejoice in, the sentence that shall be executed, whether it be on the ungodly at large, or on their own relations in particular. [Revelation 19:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.1-6).

***~~4. EVERLASTING—~~***

While here on earth, the troubled look forward to death as the termination of their woes: and men often find satisfaction in the decease of their dearest relatives, from the consideration that they now "rest from their labors." But in that place of torment, they "cry to the rocks and hills to fall upon them, and to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb;" but they cannot obtain this desired end: they wish for death, but it flees from them.

Could they but hope that their misery would end at the expiration of millions of years, they would instantly console themselves on their prospects: but the thought of eternity, O this fearful thought adds such a poignancy to their anguish, as no finite imagination can at all conceive. Could the fire ever be burnt out, or their powers be consumed by it, they would rejoice: but their punishment is *everlasting*. [Matthew 25:46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.46); "their worm dies not, and their fire cannot be quenched. [Mark 9:43-48](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 9.43-48);" on the contrary, "the smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever."

***~~Most of you will anticipate the following REFLECTIONS—~~***

***~~1. How astonishing is the spiritual lethargy of the ungodly!~~***

Were the cry of fire to be made in a crowded assembly, what pressing would be made to escape the devouring element, and how backward would people be to believe that they were not in danger! But let God, and his ministers, warn them of eternal fire, and none will pay the smallest regard to their voice! O sad infatuation! For, "who can stand before his indignation? who can abide in the fierceness of his anger. [Nahum 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Nah 1.6)," "Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings. [Isaiah 33:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 33.14)," May God awaken all of us from our security; and so lead us to examine our real character, that we may humble ourselves before him, and "flee from the wrath to come!"

***~~2. How happy are they who have the mark of God's image upon them!~~***

Blessed be God! there are many whose dispositions and habits are altogether changed; who were once *idolatrous*, and *superstitious*, yes, perhaps despisers and *persecutors*of real godliness, but are now enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and "renewed after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness." You also are "marked in your foreheads. [Ezekiel 9:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 9.4);" but "your spot is the spot of God's children. [Deuteronomy 32:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.5)." Blessed indeed are you; for "you shall be counted worthy to escape all those things which are coming on the ungodly, and to stand before the Son of Man" in his glory. For you is prepared a very different cup—a cup "wherein is fullness of joy, and pleasures at God's right hand for evermore. [Psalm 16:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 16.11)." Yes, while "fornicators, liars, hypocrites," and sinners of every description "shall have their portion in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. [Revelation 21:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.8) with [Psalm 9:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 9.17)," you shall dwell in the presence of your God, and enjoy an inconceivable happiness without mixture, intermission, or end.

#2518

***~~THE BLESSEDNESS OF DEPARTED SAINTS~~***

***~~Intended for a Funeral Sermon.~~***

***~~[Revelation 14:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 14.13)~~***

I heard a voice from Heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.

AS connected with the context, these words were intended to comfort and encourage those who should suffer martyrdom for the cause of Christ. The destruction of Antichrist is declared in the preceding verses. But as, in the meantime, the saints would be harassed with grievous persecutions, they are *here taught to endure their trials with patience, in an assured expectation of a glorious recompense*at the instant of their departure from the body. This will account for the very extraordinary way in which the most simple of all truths is here both announced and attested. The blessedness of departed saints, one would have thought, should not have needed to be promulgated in so solemn a way; especially when Christianity had been for a long period propagated, and, if I may so say, established throughout all the Roman Empire. But the circumstance of its being thus solemnly declared may well lead us to contemplate it with peculiar attention.

Let us, then, consider the blessedness of departed saints,

***~~I. As announced from Heaven to the Apostle John—~~***

***~~But WHO are they who are here pronounced blessed?~~***

Some imagine that martyrs alone were referred to: and it is certain that they were primarily in the mind of him who spoke; because they are the persons to whom, more particularly, the preceding context belongs. But yet it cannot be said of all martyrs, that they are "blessed;" for we are assured on infallible authority, that persons may go, and probably have gone, from the flames of martyrdom to those more tremendous flames that never can be quenched. Paul says, we may even "give our bodies to be burned, and yet lack Christian love" which is indispensable to our final admission into Heaven. [1 Corinthians 13:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 13.3).

We must extend our views to believers: yet even of believers it is not necessarily and universally true, that they are blessed: for we know, that there are some who "for awhile believe, but in time of temptation fall away. [Matthew 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 8.13)." In truth, it cannot be certainly said of any, while they are yet alive, that they shall be happy in the eternal world; because there is no human being of whom it can be infallibly declared that he shall persevere unto the end. After the fall of David, and Solomon, and Peter, and Demas—who shall venture to say, that he may not, after all his profession, "make shipwreck of the faith?" It is of "the dead" only that it can be affirmed, that they shall certainly be saved: and of those only who "die in the Lord." They must first *be*in Christ by a living faith; they must then "*abide*in him," bringing forth fruit to his glory; and, lastly, they must "*die*in him," humbly "hoping in him even to the end," and being "faithful unto death." Persons so living, and so dying, are truly blessed.

***~~And WHY is their blessedness so peculiarly proclaimed?~~***

It is announced by an audible voice from Heaven: and the Apostle is commanded to record it for the benefit of all future generations. Whence was the necessity for such a manifestation of so plain a truth? Had it not been known in the Church as long as any written record of God's mind and will had existed? True; it was known: but yet it was foreseen that it would be obscured by that corrupt Church that would in due time arise; and a special revelation of it therefore was given, in this extraordinary manner, for the comfort of God's saints whom that Church would persecute; and for a warning to those who should give way to fear, and turn from the holy commandment committed to them. That persecuting Church would inculcate the doctrine of purgatory, in order to enrich her ministers: but those who should die in defense of the Gospel might rest assured that their felicity would be immediate and complete, as soon as ever they should have sealed their testimony with their blood; as would also he, the misery of those who either inflicted those sufferings, or, through fear of suffering, renounced their holy profession.

The faithful should "from henceforth," from the very moment of their death, be happy; but the others, from the instant of their departure from the body, should "drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which should be poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation." The faithful universally, and the faithful exclusively, might apply to themselves this glorious truth. They should be "blessed;" but they alone: "the fearful and the unbelieving should altogether be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where they should immediately and to all eternity endure the second death. [Revelation 21:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.8)."

Lest, after all, this declaration should not have its due weight on our minds, we are led to contemplate it,

***~~II. As attested by the Spirit, to every child of man—~~***

Were the Spirit's testimony conveyed only in a way of simple assertion, it would be amply sufficient to engage our fullest confidence: but it is given in such a way as to approve itself to the judgment of every considerate man: for, with the testimony, he makes known the grounds and sources of that very blessedness, to the certainty of which his testimony is borne.

***~~1. They (the departed saints) "rest from their labors"—~~***

The trials of those who are called to suffer martyrdom are greater than we, who enjoy the protection of the civil magistrate, can imagine. I say again, We, of this happy land, have no idea of the horrors of the Inquisition, or of the cruelties exercised by the Papal Church. Even in our own land, in former days, multitudes of the most holy men have been burnt alive for their fidelity to Christ. O! what a transition must those holy saints have experienced, *from the flames of martyrdom to the bosom of their Lord!*

But, in truth, the labors of every saint are very great: it is an arduous course that they have to run; a distressing warfare to maintain. Hear the holy Apostle himself groaning under the burden of his indwelling corruptions, and crying, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death. [Romans 7:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 7.24)."

Those, indeed, who think but little of eternity, may pass through life without much care or conflict: but they who know the value of the soul, and consider that, by every act, word, and thought, they are treasuring up for themselves an ever-increasing weight, either of misery or of glory, to all eternity; they, I say, feel a burden upon the mind, a fear of falling into sin, a desire to approve themselves to God, a longing to depart that they may be with Christ: and to them rest will be sweet, as to a weary traveler, or as the haven after a tempestuous voyage.

***~~2. "Their works follow them"—~~***

Their works, however excellent, do not go before them to receive a recompense on the ground of *merit*; but they follow them as *evidences*of their integrity, and as proofs of their union with the Lord Jesus Christ. In this view, the very least work they ever performed for Christ, and by virtue derived from him, even "the giving of a cup of cold water to a disciple for his sake, shall in no wise lose its reward." Every prayer that they ever offered, yes, the very groans by which their feelings found an indistinct utterance; and their tears, which from time to time were treasured up in God's vial; shall then be brought forth by him as witnesses for them, and as demonstrations, that, in his final decisions, God conducts everything with perfect equity.

Indeed, if God were not to bring forward their works with a view to future reward, he would account himself unjust: as Paul has said; "God is not unrighteous, that he should forget your works and labor of love which you have showed towards his name." Though, as I have already said, our works can challenge nothing at his hand on the ground of merit, they may, and shall, challenge a reward of grace, and actually be the measure of our recompense at that day: for God will deal with every man according to his own works; and "every man shall receive according to his own labor."

How truly blessed then will be the man who "died in the Lord!" Perhaps, at times, he was ready to doubt whether he would find acceptance with God at all, or not: but now, to his unutterable joy, he hears his Savior say to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Lord!" Now, then, his utmost desires are all satisfied; and he is completely happy in the bosom of his God.

***~~Let me now CONCLUDE, with briefly adverting to the text—~~***

***~~1. In reference to the deceased—~~***

Here may be stated the CHARACTER of the deceased.

The character of the person, on occasion of whose death this Sermon was preached, was as near to perfection as could well be expected in the present state of the Church. The Author, in the space of forty years, has seen few that he considers as equal to her, and never one that was superior. She was indeed "a Mother in Israel." Her name was *Jane Chapman*. She was one of the first-fruits of the Author's ministry: and during nearly forty years she maintained so undeviating a course of piety, as to be the admiration of all who knew her. Until about the age of fifty-three, she lived ignorant of God and of his Christ. Her mind was first awakened to a sense of her lost condition by reading *Vivian's Dialogues between a Minister and his Parishioners*: and, from the moment that she sought for acceptance with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, her soul was filled with peace and joy in believing. Doubtless there were variations in her frames, as well as in those of others: but the*general tenor*of her life was remarkably peaceful; and she closed a most honorable career of piety, at the age of ninety-one. What the particular character of her religion was, shall now be stated in few words; but not so much for the purpose of doing honor to her, (though she is worthy to be held in the highest honor,) as for the benefit of those into whose hands this brief memorial may fall.

Her religion, then, was modest and unassuming: there was nothing of that obtrusive forwardness which is so common among the professors of our days, and so justly odious both to God and man. It was also fraught with humility and contrition. A deep sense of her utter unworthiness abode at all times upon her mind: yet there was nothing of gloom about her, nothing of melancholy; for her contrition was tempered with a lively faith, a faith that was remarkably simple. There was no leaning to anything of her own; nor any doubting of the sufficiency that was in Christ. Her whole life was one act of faith: she "lived entirely by faith in the Son of God, as having loved her, and given himself for her." At the same time it did not show itself in a bold unhallowed confidence, but in a meek and humble demeanor: and it was operative upon all her tempers, her spirit, her conduct, insomuch that it was really her "food and her drink to do the will of God;" and so consistent was her deportment that she seemed to have been cast into the very mold of the Gospel, and to possess, as far as the frailty of our fallen nature would admit, "the very mind that was in Christ Jesus." She was truly a light, not only in the world, but in the Church to which she belonged: and, while her graces were extremely diversified, and capable, like the rays of light, of bearing a distinct scrutiny, they were so blended (the somber with the brilliant), and kept in such proportioned measure and simultaneous motion, as to display a brilliancy which it was impossible to behold and not admire. Her death was such as might be expected: truly it might be said of her, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." Her last words were, "Come, Lord Jesus! I long for you. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" May the latter end, both of him who writes this Memorial, and him who reads it, be like hers! Amen, and Amen!

***~~2. In reference to those who are yet living—~~***

Inquire, I pray you, whether you be "in Christ;" for, if you be not in him, and abide not in him—then it is in vain to hope that you can "die in him." It is in vain also to dream of blessedness in the eternal world. This is the privilege of those only who "live and die in the Lord" O you who are strangers to a life of faith in the Son of God—think what your feelings will be, when your works shall follow you to the bar of judgment! In what light will they then appear? What judgment will you then form of a life devoted to the concerns of time and sense? Will a neglect of God and of your eternal interests be thought so trivial then, as you account it now? Will such a witness benefit you at the bar of judgment?

Or will the prize that shall be accorded to the successful racer and the victorious warrior, be held forth to you? No; the "rest" which is here spoken of, is reserved only for the weary traveler, who has walked with God, and "held on his way even to the end." Let this record then, which was written for your instruction, sink deep into your ears: and cease not to cry mightily to God for his converting grace, that you yourselves may be that character, for whose consolation it was so announced, and for whose encouragement it was so attested.

#2519

***~~THE SONG OF MOSES AND THE LAMB~~***

***~~[Revelation 15:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 15.3-4)~~***

And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are your ways, O King of saints. Who shall not fear you, O Lord, and glorify your name?

THE reign of Antichrist, and his ultimate destruction, occupy a large portion of the Revelation of John. His destruction has been foretold in the chapter which precedes my text; and is more circumstantially declared in that which follows it. In the chapter before us we have an introductory vision, representing the joy and triumph which the glorified saints would express on that occasion. But respecting the particular circumstances of the vision, commentators are by no means agreed. Where this is the case, I would not presume to speak with confidence, especially where I am under the necessity of differing from those which are most generally, and most justly, approved. But it appears to me, that too little attention has been paid to the context; and that if the parallel, which is evidently drawn between the deliverance at the Red Sea and our redemption by Christ, be taken as a clue, the whole will be unraveled, and simplicity itself will pervade that, which, with any other interpretation, will present nothing to our view but inexplicable obscurity.

"A sea of glass" is mentioned before, in the fourth chapter. [Revelation 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 4.6); where it is supposed to refer to the brazen sea which was in the temple, and which was filled with water for the service of the priests. [1 Kings 7:23-26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Kings 7.23-26). But we are not on that account limited to that view of it in this place. It is well known, that the same images are used in reference to different things, especially in this highly figurative book: and the reference must always be determined by the context.

Now consider, What is the *subject*that is here spoken of? It is the destruction of all the enemies of God and of his Christ. And what is the *illustration*given of it? It is taken from the destruction of Pharaoh and the Egyptian hosts in the Red Sea. And what are the *terms*in which this deliverance is celebrated? They precisely accord with those which were used by Moses and the Israelites on that occasion; as we shall more distinctly point out in our further view of the subject. Now take this clue, and the whole vision will be extremely clear, and perfectly harmonious in all its parts, without any occasion for fanciful conjectures. We will paraphrase the whole in conformity with this idea.

"I saw, as it were, a sea," where "the saints had got the victory" over their persecuting and bloodthirsty enemies: and it was, "as it were, a sea of glass mingled with fire;" the waters, having overwhelmed all God's enemies, were now calm, and clear as crystal itself, while the coruscations of light emanating from the pillar of fire, and shining with the brightest possible effulgence, made the whole sea appear as if it were mingled with fire. This is a common appearance of water reflecting the rays of the rising or setting sun.

And I saw the victorious saints "standing (close) upon it." And I heard them "sing a song to the Lamb" of God, precisely similar to that which was sung by Moses and the Israelites at the Red Sea, adoring "their God and King" as the sole author of their deliverance, and prophetically declaring, that he shall in due time "reign over all nations forever and ever. Compare verse 2–4 with [Exodus 15:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 15.1); [Exodus 15:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 15.6); [Exodus 15:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 15.18)."

This song we now proceed to consider. The *former*part of it consists of retrospective adoration; and the *latter*part, of prospective exultation and triumph.

Let us notice what is spoken by them in a way—

***~~I. Of retrospective adoration—~~***

Filled with the profoundest gratitude, they celebrate,

***~~1. The deliverance they have experienced—~~***

Great was the deliverance given to Israel; as Moses said, "In the greatness of your excellency you have overthrown those who rose up against you: you sent forth your wrath, which consumed them as stubble. [Exodus 15:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 15.7)." But beyond all comparison greater is that deliverance which the saints experience from the enemies of their salvation: and, when their triumphs are complete, they will have proportionably greater reason to sing,*"Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty!"*

Dreadful have been the sufferings which multitudes have endured from the anti-Christian powers. But it is not from a mere human foe that they have been rescued, but from the great dragon, that old serpent, the Devil, and from all his hosts. Nor is it from a mere *temporal*death that they have escaped, but from *everlasting*death in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. Nor is it by a mere exercise of power that this deliverance has been effected for them, but by the incarnation and death of God's co-equal, co-eternal Son; from whence it is that they sing, "Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty;" "just and true are your ways, O King of Saints;" for, as Jehovah, the Redeemer of Israel, was their King, and took them under his own immediate government, so is "the Lord God Almighty our King," even "the King of all the saints," that ever have been or ever shall be saved. It is "the Mighty God," who, by the wonders he has wrought for us, is become the "the Prince of Peace. [Isaiah 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 9.6)."

***~~2. The perfections of God displayed in it—~~***

Most cruel had been the conduct of Pharaoh towards the children of Israel: and God had repeatedly declared, both to him and to Israel themselves, that he would deliver them out of his hands. When therefore Pharaoh, with all his host, was destroyed in the Red Sea, Moses particularly noticed the correspondence between his impiety and the judgments inflicted on him: "The enemy said, I will pursue; I will overtake; I will divide the spoil; my soul shall be satisfied upon them: I will draw my sword: my hand shall destroy. You blew with your wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. [Exodus 15:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 15.9-10)."

But view the perfections of God in the work of redemption. Truly, "God knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished. [2 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 2.9)."

Or, take a more comprehensive view of it: see Justice, not merely as honored by the atonement made for sin, but as demanding salvation, if I may so speak, for those for whom it was offered; demanding it, as due to him who made that atonement, and as due to those who trust in it for their acceptance before God. See *truth*also fulfilling all the promises of God to his believing people, and making the very rage of their enemies the occasion of displaying more abundantly in their behalf his power and grace. Not even Mercy itself will appear more glorious to the redeemed soul in Heaven, than will these once hostile perfections of justice and truth: for while the saint was in his unconverted state, these were the perfections which most loudly called for the judgments of God upon him; but, on his believing in Christ, they instantly became his advocates, and from thenceforth will remain through eternal ages his greatest security. As the Lord Jesus is "faithful and just to forgive him his sins," so will he be in confirming to him that forgiveness forever and ever.

Here I must particularly call your attention to the correspondence between the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. Moses sang, "Who is like unto you, O God, among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. [Exodus 15:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 15.11)." So, in the words following my text, God's holiness is acknowledged, "You alone are holy;" while, in my text itself, all the other perfections of the Deity are magnified and adored.

The song of the redeemed proceeds yet farther in strains,

***~~II. Of prospective exultation and triumph—~~***

How forcible is the appeal which they make to the whole universe!

It is particularly said of the Israelites on that occasion, that "when they saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and his servant Moses. [Exodus 14:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 14.31). Certainly we cannot suppose, that there was so much as one among them that was not deeply impressed with the mercy given unto him.

And shall there be found one among those who profess to have been redeemed by Christ, "who will not fear him, and glorify his name?" It is said of the converts in the millennial age, that "they shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days. [Hosea 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 3.5)." And indeed *it is impossible to contemplate this goodness, and not desire to give up ourselves entirely to him*. Such a surrender of ourselves to him must appear to all "a reasonable service. [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1)." Having been "bought with such a price," even "with the precious blood of that spotless Lamb. [1 Peter 1:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.18-19)"—what can we think of for a moment, but to "glorify him with our bodies and our spirits which are his. [2 Corinthians 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 6.20)."

Have we not abundant encouragement to do so? Look at the Israelites at the Red Sea. How many of them perished in the sea? Not one. And how many of their enemies escaped destruction? Not one; "The waters covered them; there was not one of them left. [Psalm 106:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 106.11)." And shall it not be so with those who commit themselves to the guidance of the Lamb? Will not He also "make the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over. [Isaiah 51:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 51.10)," Yes, "they shall go over dry-shod. [Isaiah 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.15)." As the Hebrew youths in the furnace "had not so much as the smell of fire pass upon them," so shall the whole body of the redeemed escape from their trials without even the shadow of an injury sustained by them. We cannot conceive a greater disparity than between Pharaoh with his "six hundred chariots of war," and the unarmed hosts of Israel with a million women and children to protect: but God was on their side: and God is on our side too: and "it is not his will that one of his little ones should perish. [Matthew 18:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 18.14)." It matters not how numerous or potent our enemies may be: let us only fear "the King of saints," and confide in him; and we shall soon "behold them all dead upon the sea-shore. [Exodus 14:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 14.30)."

What the redeemed in their song inculcate as so reasonable, they look forward to as certainly to be accomplished in due season throughout the whole earth—

This is very particularly insisted on in the song of Moses: "The people shall hear and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed: the mighty men of Moab, trembling, shall take hold upon them: all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall on them: and the Lord shall reign forever and ever. [Exodus 15:14-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 15.14-18)."

So shall our adorable Redeemer be feared throughout the whole earth, as it is said in the words following my text, "All nations shall come and worship before you; for your judgments (your saving truths) are made manifest." The obligation to fear and glorify our blessed Lord is becoming more extensively known: and the time is not far distant now when it shall be universally known and universally acknowledged. The wonderful works that he has wrought shall not be heard so partially and with such indifference as they now are: the glad tidings of redemption shall be carried to the utmost ends of the earth, and "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" "All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him." Blessed prospect! worthy to be celebrated by the heavenly hosts! and worthy of the incessant attention of every child of man!

And now let me ask, *Who will not fear and glorify our redeeming God?*

Are any of you who are here present prepared to say, that he does not deserve this tribute at your hands? What would you have thought of an Israelite who would have made such an assertion at the Red Sea? And, if you would have condemned him as a graceless and ungrateful wretch, what must you think of yourselves, who have experienced such infinitely richer mercy at his hands? O come; come and stand upon this sea of glass: behold its waves all calmed and smooth as crystal itself: see the coruscations of the cloud, and the impress of the Deity himself upon it: reflect on what has been wrought for you. Ponder the height and depth and length and breadth of the incomprehensible love contained in it: take your harps: tune them to the songs of the redeemed above: begin the song of Moses and the Lamb: join with them, however feeble you are. Notes, the choir above, and look forward to the day when you shall strike your harps even as they do; and yours. Notes shall be heard as loud and as melodious as any of theirs.

O blessed day! "Look for it: hasten to it." It is but a little time longer, that you have to contend with principalities and powers. Your victory over them is sure: and shall speedily be consummated. Your enemies are following you indeed, as Pharaoh did, saying, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil: my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them." But, in a little moment, "God will blow with his wind; and the sea shall cover them: and they shall sink as lead in the mighty waters! [Exodus 15:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 15.9-10)."

To the weakest among you all, is this consolatory message sent: "Fear not; for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that were incensed against you shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing: and those who strive with you shall perish. You shall seek them, and shall not find them, even them that contended with you: those who war against you shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nothing. [Isaiah 41:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.10-12)." May this glorious consummation speedily be accomplished! Even so, Amen, and Amen!

#2520

***~~REPENTANCE~~***

***~~[Revelation 16:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 16.8-9)~~***

"The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but *they refused to repent*and glorify Him."

THROUGHOUT this chapter, the Apostle is speaking of the seven last plagues which were to be poured out upon the earth by the instrumentality of seven different angels, each of them having a vial of wrath committed to his hands for that purpose. [Revelation 15:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 15.1),[7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Revelation 15.7). As no man can with certainty determine the periods and the events to which these prophecies refer, I shall forbear to speak of them, any further than to observe, that God would by these afflictive dispensations bring men to repentance; but "they refused to repent and glorify Him." The same, alas! may be said of too many among ourselves: for whose benefit I propose to consider the subject of repentance, and to commend it to them,

***~~I. As giving glory to God—~~***

I conceive that all will readily acknowledge that they need repentance; so that I need not at present enter upon that point, or endeavor to convince any that it is their duty to repent. But the true light in which repentance should be viewed is not generally seen: it is regarded only as a means of averting wrath: whereas it should be considered as "giving glory to God."

Sin has greatly dishonored God: it, in fact, pours contempt on every perfection of the Deity, saying, "Tush, God shall not see; neither will the Almighty regard it." Repentance, on the contrary, honors God, and gives glory to Him:

***~~1. As an omnipresent and omniscient God—~~***

Repentance, if it be really genuine, enters into all the secrets of the soul, and spreads them before God; acknowledging, that God has seen them all, and that he will surely call us into judgment for them. Now, I entreat you, brethren, to honor God in this view; and, like Achan, to "give glory to Him, confessing" before him what no human eye has ever seen, even the most hidden abominations of your hearts. [Joshua 7:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Josh 7.19).

***~~2. As a just and holy God—~~***

An impenitent man considers his sins as light and trivial; and thinks that God may well overlook them, without any expressions of his wrath and indignation. But a true penitent regards God as "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," and as bound, for the honor of his own moral government, to execute vengeance on the transgressors of his law. Real humility will justify God in all his threatenings; and will tremble at them, as sure to be executed in their appointed season. Do you then, beloved, see how impossible it is for you ever to dwell in the Divine presence, unless you are first cleansed from your guilt in "the fountain opened for sin and for impurity," and purified from your pollutions by the influences of the Holy Spirit. See this; feel this; acknowledge this—and hope for mercy in no other way than this.

***~~3. As a merciful and gracious God—~~***

Nothing but a persuasion that God is merciful can ever encourage true penitence. Without this view of the Deity, a man will lie down in utter despair. But look into the Scriptures; hear the representation which Jehovah gives of his own character, as "merciful and gracious, keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin;" and then will you come to him, not merely as to a Governor and a Judge, but as to a Father and a Friend.

***~~4. As a true and faithful God—~~***

Question not his invitations or his promises: but take them; trust in them; plead them before the mercy-seat; and determine, that, if you ever perish, you will perish at the foot of the cross, looking to Jesus as your only hope, and resting altogether on his meritorious death and passion. This is the posture of every true penitent: nor shall any sinner in the universe, who thus comes to God, ever fail of obtaining mercy at his hands.

But I would commend repentance to you further,

***~~II. As answering the end of all his dispensations—~~***

God "delights not in the death of a sinner, but rather that he turn from his wickedness and live." To bring men to him with penitential sorrow, and thus to effect their restoration to his favor, is the end of all his dispensations. It is the end,

***~~1. Of his mercies—~~***

Considering what a wicked world this is, it is wonderful that God does not break forth in indignation against us, and overwhelm us all, as he did Sodom and Gomorrah. But on the great mass of mankind he is conferring the richest benefits from day to day; "causing his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and his rain to descend on the just and on the unjust." Let all of us survey the dealings of God with us from our youth up; and we shall see that God has borne with us beyond all that we could have reasonably expected; and that our "blessings have been double" the amount of the judgments we have merited. [Isaiah 40:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.2); [Isaiah 61:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 61.7).

And what has been God's design in all these dispensations? Has it been to encourage our thoughtlessness, and to lull us asleep in our sins? No: it has been, as Paul expressly tells us, "to lead us to repentance. [Romans 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.4)." And shall not these mercies be improved for this end? Let us blush, and be ashamed, that ever we could continue in rebellion against so good a God, and so basely requite our heavenly Benefactor!

***~~2. Of his judgments—~~***

God does sometimes strive with men in a way of merited displeasure: and, when he does so, he bids us "hear the rod, and Him that has appointed it." And is there anything difficult to be understood in such dispensations as these? No: he has told us "why he visits men for sin;" and, if he have threatened to punish the impenitent "seven-fold more for their sins," and "to scourge them with scorpions," the deduction is clear, namely, that "he chastises us for our profit, that he may make us partakers of his holiness." He seeks by all means to "bring us to repentance, and to the acknowledgment of the truth."

Has he then afflicted any of us, either in our own persons, or in the persons of those who are dear unto us? Are we troubled in any respect, in mind, body, or estate? Let us make it an occasion of inquiring "wherefore God contends with us;" and of turning unto him with truly penitential sorrow, if by any means he turns from his fierce anger, and be pacified towards us. [Amos 4:6-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 4.6-12).

***~~Let me conclude with a word of beneficial ADVICE—~~***

***~~1. Let your repentance be genuine—~~***

Let it not be such as is but too common in a season of affliction, a forced acknowledgment of sins, which yet you have no disposition to renounce. [Psalm 78:34-37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 78.34-37); but such as the Corinthians experienced under the remonstrances of Paul. [2 Corinthians 7:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 7.10-11). O that in all these different exercises of mind, you may make it clear that your repentance is genuine, even "such a repentance as is never to be repented of!"

***~~2. Delay it not—~~***

Many defer their repentance, under an idea that in a season of sickness or affliction they will find it more easy. But, in truth, the very reverse of this will be found more agreeable to fact and experience. Afflictions will not, of themselves, humble the soul: they will rather irritate and harden the soul of man; just as they wrought on the proud rebellious Pharaoh, and on the persons specified in my text. See verse 10, 11. Ask of persons, when bowed down with pain or trouble, whether they find the same freedom of mind as in seasons of ease: and they will tell you, that they are rather impeded than aided, in their repentance, by the distractions which they suffer. Be you then, brethren, careful to improve the present time. And if you will really give glory to your God, in repenting of your sins, you need not fear but that he will receive you to mercy, and honor you as his accepted and special and purchased people.

#2521

***~~FRIENDS AND ENEMIES OF CHRIST~~***

***~~[Revelation 17:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 17.14)~~***

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

THE book of Revelation is confessedly dark and mysterious: yet there are many parts of it plain and perspicuous. The prophecy before us is not without its difficulties. We cannot doubt, however, but that it declares the downfall of popery. But we forbear to dwell on those parts which are difficult of interpretation: we confine our attention to what is most obvious in the text: in illustrating which we shall show,

***~~I. Who they are that war against the Lamb—~~***

The text speaks of those who would oppose the cause of Christ, and the interests of his Gospel. Now this is done by,

***~~1. Those who maintain sentiments contrary to the Gospel of Christ—~~***

A person may err with respect to subordinate matters, and yet have his heart, on the whole, right with God; but an error in the fundamental points argues a depraved state of mind. A man who denies the divinity of Christ, the sufficiency of his atonement, the influences of his Spirit upon the soul, or the necessity of an unreserved devotedness of heart to God—sets aside the whole Gospel; he therefore opposes Christ in his most essential interests, and wars against the Lamb. [Luke 10:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 10.16).

***~~2. Those who endeavor to subvert his influence over his people's hearts—~~***

There is scarcely an unconverted person that does not, like Cain and Ishmael, revile and persecute the children of God: and how many does such treatment intimidate and subvert! Whatever then a scoffing world may think of their conduct, *they are really fighting against Christ himself.*In touching his people, they touch the apple of his eye. [Acts 9:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 9.4). [Zechariah 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 2.8).

But we cannot doubt,

***~~II. What will be the outcome of the contest—~~***

The enemies of Christ may appear to triumph for a while, but he will surely overcome them at the last.

***~~Over some he will triumph by his grace—~~***

None are beyond the reach of his arm; none are so vile but that he feels compassion towards them; nor are any so stout-hearted but he is able to subdue them. He who vanquished the persecuting Saul, can and will make others also to be similar *monuments of his grace and mercy*.

***~~But those who reject all his overtures of mercy, he will break in pieces like a potter's vessel—~~***

His triumphs over them are admirably painted in the second Psalm; and he himself tells us what a sentence he will pass upon them in the day of judgment. [Luke 19:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 19.27). However long their conflicts with him may be, this must at last be the termination of them.

To impress this on our minds, let us consider,

***~~III. What assurance we have that such shall be the outcome of it—~~***

Two pledges of his victory are mentioned in the, text:

***~~1. His own power—~~***

Were he but the first of created beings, his success might be uncertain; but he is "Lord of lords, and King of kings." And though he is a Lamb, yet will he show himself to be the "Lion of the tribe of Judah." Whoever shall presume to oppose him, he will overcome them, and burn them up together. [Isaiah 27:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 27.4).

***~~2. His people's constancy—~~***

They have not indeed, of themselves, any strength or constancy; but they have been "chosen" of God from before the foundation of the world. [Ephesians 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.4). They have in due time been "called" by the effectual operation of his grace; and they are made "faithful" by him, so that nothing can induce them to desert his cause. [Acts 20:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 20.20). The least and weakest among them all is more than conqueror through the strength of Christ. [Romans 8:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.37); and all may adopt the language of triumph, even while conflicting on the field of battle. Romans 8.

**APPLICATION**—

***~~1. Let us assist you in inquiring whether you are among the friends or enemies of Christ—~~***

While some are against Christ, others "are with him;" they are with him in sentiment, in affection, in profession, in conduct. How great is the difference between those who in outward appearance are the same! O search and see whether you are the friends or enemies of Christ. [Matthew 12:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 12.30); according as you prove yourselves to be in this life, you will surely be found in the day of judgment.

***~~2. Let us address each of those characters—~~***

To his *enemies*we say, Consider whose enemies you are. Is this the treatment he has deserved at your hands? Is there not a time coming when he will fearfully resent it?

If you are of the number of his friends, "walk worthy of the calling with which you are called. [Ephesians 4:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.1)." Let nothing, however pleasing, or however formidable, tempt you to forsake him. Be faithful unto death, and he will give you a crown of life. [Revelation 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.10).

#2522

***~~God's Government, a Ground of Joy~~***

***~~[Revelation 19:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.6)~~***

Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!

IN the *government*of Jehovah all acquiesce, so far as relates to his conferring of rewards upon his obedient people. But from his inflicting of punishment on the disobedient, the minds of the generality revolt; because they have formed to themselves an idea of a God whose *mercy*swallows up, as it were, all his other attributes. But *justice*is, in its place, as honorable to the Deity as mercy: and the exercise of it, towards those who shall die in their sins, will be a subject of praise and thanksgiving through all the hosts of Heaven, no less than the exercise of mercy itself!

The whole preceding chapter proclaims the destruction of the mystical Babylon, that is, of Rome; whose abominations have reached unto Heaven, and whose persecutions of the saints have been long crying out for vengeance against her. At the execution of God's judgments upon her, all Heaven is represented as rejoicing: and the one song which is heard through all the regions of the blessed, is "Alleluia! for true and righteous are God's judgments: for he has judged the great whore, which corrupted the earth with her fornication, and has avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia! and her smoke rose up forever and ever."

In this, all on earth are called to unite: and the entire chorus of the assembled universe is "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns."

Connected with the ruin of antichrist is the diffusion of the Redeemer's kingdom throughout the world: for then will be the marriage of the Lamb, and his taking of the Church into a visible union with himself, and his consummation of her happiness. Then will the Lord God Omnipotent reign on earth—and nothing but hallelujahs be heard throughout the universe. Let me then call upon you, as it were by a voice from Heaven, to commence this song,

***~~I. As an expression of grateful acknowledgment—~~***

***~~Certain it is, that we have abundant ground for this song in this present world—~~***

Let us look back to the circumstances of our birth; the time, when the Sun of Righteousness had arisen upon the earth; and the place, where his rays were shining forth in their meridian splendor. This can be traced to nothing but God's sovereign will and pleasure: for it is to Him alone that we owe it, that we were not born amidst all the errors of Popish delusion; or in a heathen land, under the darkness of Pagan superstition, or of Mohammedan imposture.

*Let us survey our whole life*; our dangers, both seen and unseen; and our deliverances, which nothing but an overruling Providence could ever have effected. Particularly, let us view our temptations to sin, and the wonderful *preservations*which we have experienced: sometimes, perhaps, through the remonstrances of conscience; sometimes through the intervention of some seasonable occurrence; and sometimes through a mere lack of opportunity to execute the secret wishes of our hearts. Let us, in this respect, compare ourselves with those who, having been less favorably circumstanced in relation to their temptations and restraints, have been left to carry into effect the evil dictates of their hearts; and we shall, if we know anything of ourselves, find abundant occasion for thanksgivings to our God.

If, through the grace of God, we have been brought to the knowledge of Christ, and been made partakers of his salvation, shall we not, in that case, pour forth our acclamations and Hosannahs?

Or, if we be yet in our unconverted state, shall we not praise him, that "space is yet given us for repentance?" If there were no other ground of praise than this, that *we are not at this moment lifting up our eyes in the torments of Hell, and crying in vain for a drop of water to cool our tongues*—there is not one among us who may not well lift up his voice, even as thunder itself, in hallelujahs to *the Lord God Omnipotent, who, by his sovereign power and grace, has distinguished us from the millions who are gone beyond a possibility of redemption*.

***~~And shall we not burst forth into this song, the very instant that we enter into the invisible world—~~***

There we shall have a complete view of all the *dangers*to which we ever were exposed, and all the *deliverances*that ever were given unto us here below.

Our feelings will be not unlike to those of Joshua and the Israelites after their establishment in the land of Canaan. They doubtless would look back on all their way, from the time that Moses had come to Egypt for their deliverance: they would call to *remembrance*the many successive plagues that had been inflicted on that land for the humiliation of Pharaoh, and the terrible slaughter of the first-born that had at last constrained him to consent: they would have strongly painted also before their eyes the *dangers*to which they had been exposed, when, with the sea before them, and mountains and morasses on either side, the enraged army of Pharaoh pressed upon their rear. They would, in particular, review their passing through the Red Sea as on dry ground, and the total destruction of their pursuers in the returning waters.

In a word, they would have before their eyes the diversified events during the whole of their sojourning in the wilderness, the mercies and the judgments of every kind, until at last they were brought in safety to the possession of the promised land.

Nor would they be unmindful of the myriads, who, through their unbelief, had fallen short of that rest; and of the *distinguishing favors*which they themselves had experienced at the hands of God.

Thus, I say, will our souls, if ever they be permitted to reach the heavenly land, behold at one glance all the wonders of grace and mercy which they have experienced in this valley of tears: and, O with what rapture will they adore and magnify their God! Methinks the deafening sound of cataracts, or the terrific roar of thunders, will be as nothing, in comparison of the hallelujahs that shall burst from the millions of the redeemed at that day.

But there is another view, in which the words of my text may be considered; namely,

***~~II. As an effusion of confident anticipation—~~***

This, indeed, is the precise view in which they should be understood; for Rome is not yet destroyed; and, consequently, the "alleluias" are uttered only in the prospect of that event. And we too, with a prospective regard to future events, may utter this song: we may utter it,

***~~1. In reference to the world at large—~~***

Most awful is the state of the world at this time. Revolutions and counter-revolutions are occurring in mighty kingdoms, and in rapid succession: and no one can foresee what their end shall be. *But it is a sweet consolatory thought, that God reigns, and is accomplishing his own designs by these unconscious and unwitting agents*.

In the rise and fall of the four great empires, God wrought his own sovereign and unerring will. Cyrus little thought whose instrument he was, in the subversion of the *Chaldean*empire; nor did the mighty conquerors, who, in succession, reduced the *Persian*, *Grecian*, and *Roman*empires, know whose decrees they executed, or whose purposes they fulfilled.

Just so, at this time, contending nations little imagine that there is One on high who makes use of them for the effecting of his own purposes; and who will infallibly direct their ambitious and selfish projects for the attainment of his own ends.

Nothing can appear more independent of the Deity than "winds and storms," yet they, all of them without exception, "fulfill his will," and truly this may well compose our minds, in relation to the outcome of these events: and while others are filled with terrors, we may calmly and confidently say, "Alleluia! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

***~~2. In reference to the Church of God—~~***

The church is at a low ebb. Whole countries, where religion once flourished, are now as destitute of it as if the Gospel had never been proclaimed unto them. Even the Churches of Asia, once so distinguished by the favor of Heaven, have their candlesticks removed, and are now immersed in total darkness. And Christendom itself is in a very dark degraded state; few, very few, experiencing the power of godliness, or adorning in any respect the principles they profess.

But shall the light of divine truth be wholly extinguished, or the powers of darkness ultimately prevail against the Church of Christ? No! We are assured that "the gates of Hell shall never prevail against it." Not all the efforts of God's enemies, therefore, need intimidate us, or partial failures tempt us to despond. "God's counsel shall stand; and He will do all his will." God sees the impious conspiracies of the wicked; and *he laughs them to scorn* saying, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." And the time is surely coming, when "all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ," so that, with as much confidence as if we saw this already actually existing, we may celebrate it with the loudest hallelujahs to God and to the Lamb.

***~~3. In reference to our own souls—~~***

Many discouragements do we meet with in our way; so that we are ready at times to say, like David, "I shall one day perish by the hands of my great enemy!" But it is our privilege to know that "God has laid help for us upon One that is mighty," and that "greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world."

See the spirit of David, when replying to the boasts of the self-confident Goliath. Such should be our spirit, in the midst of all our conflicts: nor should we doubt the outcome of the contest, when we go forth in the name of the God of Israel, though we have nothing but a sling and a stone with which to oppose our mighty adversary.

In a certain prospect of being "more than conquerors through Him that loves us," we may adopt the language of the prophet, "The Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like flint; and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near who justifies me: who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me! Who is he who shall condemn me? Lo, they all shall wax old, as a garment: the moth shall eat them up."

Such was also the Apostle's boast: and such also may be ours. "Let the floods lift up their waves ever so high, He who sits on high is mightier," and therefore, in a certain dependence upon him, we may go on our way, assured of victory, and saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

**III. APPLICATION:**

**1. See then, beloved, what ground we have in this passage, for SUBMISSION.**

There will doubtless be many adverse circumstances, which, at the time, will prove very afflictive to us. But we must never forget, that, however random they may appear, or with whatever hostile intention they may be contrived, *they are all ordered by unerring wisdom and unbounded love*. And, however bitter they may be, we should say, "The *cup*which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" We should remember, that, though "clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the basis of his throne."

Jacob's complaint, "All these things are against me," was far from being justified by the outcome; for the very events which he complained of, were the means ordained for the preservation of his whole family. Only bear in mind, that *God rules on high*; and then, whatever may occur, you will say, "It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him."

***~~2. See what ground we have in this passage, for GRATITUDE.~~***

*Discern the hand of God in everything, and your mouth will be ever filled with praise.* What is *painful*, will be received as a token of his love. What is *pleasing*, will be received as a fruit of his favor. But, above all, the *security*which will be felt in the soul, and that in the midst of this tumultuous and ensnaring world—methinks, in the contemplation of this, a man's songs of praise should be as loud and constant as those in Heaven.

Dear brethren, think of this: Nothing is done, which does not proceed from the hand of God; nor shall anything be done, which shall not "work together for your good." Rejoice then, and shout for joy—and let your Alleluias go forth unto your God day and night!

***~~3. See what ground we have in this passage, for COMFORT.~~***

Put yourselves, and all your concerns, into the hands of your Almighty Friend! Fear not, though all the men on earth, and all the fiends in Hell, should be confederate against you. If you cannot comprehend God's dealings with you now, be content; and say, "What I know not now, I shall know hereafter." Wait, to "see the end of the Lord," and if, like Job, you are afflicted now, expect that, like him, you shall before long see reason to glorify your God for all his dispensations—however dark, however afflictive. Of this you may be assured, that those who wait on him shall find him ready to help; and "those who trust in him shall not be ashamed or confounded world without end."

*"Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"* [Revelation 19:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.6)

#2523

***~~THE CHURCH'S UNION WITH CHRIST~~***

***~~[Revelation 19:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.7-8)~~***

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

THERE are some passages of Scripture which are particularly marked, as it were, by God himself, in order that we might be aware of their importance, and give to them the attention they deserve. The destruction of antichrist, and the establishment of Christ's universal kingdom, are here represented as already effected, and as being the subjects of most exalted joy to all the hosts of Heaven. And that the Church of God in all ages might look forward with earnestness to these glorious events, John was ordered to write them in a book, and to declare with more than ordinary solemnity, that "they were the true sayings of God."

Without entering too minutely into the figure by which the Church's connection with Christ is here expressed, we will call your attention to,

***~~I. The nuptials here announced—~~***

***~~The Bridegroom is our Lord Jesus Christ—~~***

In this view he is spoken of throughout the whole Scriptures. In the Old Testament in [Isaiah 54:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.5), [Ezekiel 16:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 16.8), [Hosea 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 2.19), and by Solomon throughout the whole book of Canticles: and in the New Testament by John the Baptist, [John 3:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.29), and John the Evangelist, [Revelation 21:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.2); [Revelation 21:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.9), and Paul. [Ephesians 5:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.31-32), and by Christ himself, [Matthew 9:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 9.15); [Matthew 22:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 22.2).

***~~The bride is his Church both in her individual and collective capacity—~~***

Every soul at its first conversion is thus united to Christ, being made, not one flesh only, but also one spirit with him. [Ephesians 5:30](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.30), [1 Corinthians 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.17). Of the Corinthian Church individually did Paul say, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. [2 Corinthians 11:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.2)."

But it is of the whole Church more particularly that the Apostle speaks in my text. The whole Church both of Jews and Gentiles shall in due season be united under one Head, and be prepared as a bride altogether fit for the heavenly Bridegroom. Doubtless it is the righteousness of Christ which alone can avail for her justification before God. [Daniel 9:24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 9.24) and [Romans 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.22); [Romans 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 10.4); but it is an *inward righteousness*of which my text speaks; and which constitutes the believer's fitness. [Colossians 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.12); for this high honor. In the latter day shall all the elect be converted to God, and become "all righteous. [Isaiah 60:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.21)." Then shall all of them "be presented to him a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but be holy and without blemish. [Ephesians 5:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.27)." This is the holy city that descends from God out of Heaven, or in other words, this is "The Lamb's wife. [Revelation 21:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.2); [Revelation 21:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.9)."

Let us next advert to,

***~~II. The blessedness of the occasion—~~***

***~~To the bride it will be most blessed—~~***

Let every one look back and see from what a state his soul has been brought to a participation of this honor [Ezekiel 16:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 16.4-6), and to what dignity it is exalted: and can this be any thing but an occasion of joy?

Or let the state of the world at large be surveyed, and then let the change that shall be wrought in it be contemplated: truly the declarations of God respecting it appear utterly incredible. But thus it shall be. "All the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ;" and "all flesh shall see the salvation of God." Well then may the whole creation be called on to exult with the saints, saying, "Sing, O heavens; for the Lord has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel. [Isaiah 44:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 44.23)."

***~~To the bridegroom himself it will be an occasion of all imaginable honor and glory—~~***

To his electing love will every soul ascribe the blessedness conferred upon him. [John 15:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.16). Nay more, in this blessedness will every one see the fruit of redeeming love: "He loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, and present it to himself" in a state worthy of the relation which it has been ordained to sustain. [Ephesians 5:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.26). To all eternity will there be but one song of praise among them all, "To him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. [Revelation 1:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.5-6)."

How sweet their communion with him will be, or how rich their communications from him—I shall not attempt to describe. Suffice it to say, that, *as he will be the only source of happiness to all, so will he be to them the one object of love and gratitude, of praise and thanksgiving*.

***~~But here is matter for serious INQUIRY—~~***

All of us hope to partake of this honor and happiness: but are we all really seeking it? Have we given up ourselves to Christ? If not, how can we hope that He should give up himself to us? Are we preparing daily for that blessed occasion, "putting off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and putting on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. [Ephesians 4:22-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 4.22-24). If not, how can we think that he will acknowledge us in that near relation to him, the relation of a spouse? His spouse must be "all glorious within, and her clothing be of wrought gold. [Psalm 45:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 45.13)," or she will create in his mind nothing but disgust.

I pray you, my dear brethren, deceive not your own selves. To surrender up yourselves entirely to him is nothing but your "reasonable service. [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 12.1)." It is nothing more than what we ourselves expect in forming such a relation with a creature like ourselves. If you have formed no such purposes, and adopted no such measures, it is in vain to imagine that your unwarrantable hopes shall ever be realized. If you have but begun to renounce all other lovers, and to set your affections on him alone, the very angels before the throne of God have rejoiced on your account. [Luke 15:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 15.10). But, if you die before this devotion of yourselves to him has taken place, nothing remains to you to all eternity but "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

Behold then, as the Apostle said to the whole Corinthian Church, so say I to you, I am at this moment desirous of "espousing you to one Husband, that I may present you, both in your individual and collective capacity, as a chaste virgin to Christ. [2 Corinthians 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 2.2)." O that my overtures may not be in vain! If you be but willing to accede to my proposals, in the name of the Most High God do I declare to you, that "as a bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so will your God rejoice over you. [Isaiah 62:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 62.5)." Be not discouraged by the thought of past unfaithfulness: for he will not be extreme to mark what has been done amiss. He bids you to return to him with an assurance of forgiveness. [Jeremiah 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 3.1), [14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jeremiah 3.14); and, if you henceforth "walk worthy of your high calling, he will acknowledge you as his before the whole assembled universe, and raise you to a full enjoyment of his presence and glory to all eternity! [Zephaniah 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zeph 3.17).

#2524

***~~THE MARRIAGE-SUPPER OF THE LAMB~~***

***~~[Revelation 19:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.9)~~***

Write: Blessed are those who are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

And he says unto me: These are the true sayings of God.

THE period referred to seems to be that of the millennium; preparatory to which, we are well assured, the popish power will be destroyed. That is the power which, in the book of Revelation, is designated the harlot, the whore of Babylon; and her destruction is that which is predicted in the preceding context. The frequent repetition of the word "Alleluia," (which is a Hebrew word,) in the preceding verses, has given occasion to commentators to suppose, that the destruction of popery will, in a pre-eminent degree, attract the attention of the Jews, and dispose them to embrace the faith of Christ. However this may be, it will certainly be a signal to the world at large for their uniting themselves unto the Lord: and then will come what is here called "The marriage-supper of the Lamb;" and a very extraordinary degree of happiness will be poured out upon all the guests that are partakers of it,

Let us consider,

***~~I. What is the feast here spoken of—~~***

It is called, "The marriage-supper of the Lamb." Now,

***~~The Lord Jesus Christ is the Husband of his Church—~~***

This is frequently declared in the Holy Scriptures. The Prophet Isaiah says, "Your Maker is your husband. [Isaiah 54:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 54.5);" and David enters very particularly into the subject, drawing a parallel between the union of men with their female captives, and the union which takes place between the Lord Jesus Christ and his believing people. The captive maidens were to be allowed a month to forget their friends and relatives. And thus believers are first taken captive by the power of the Lord Jesus; and then, having forgotten all former bonds, they are to be united unto him forever. [Isaiah 45:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 45.10-11).

In the New Testament the same idea is frequently suggested. Paul speaks of believers being "presented as a chaste virgin to Christ. [2 Corinthians 11:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 11.2);" and, in another place, after opening fully the duties of husbands and wives, he says, "I speak concerning Christ and his Church. [Ephesians 5:32](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 5.32)."

***~~On occasion of his union with her, he gives a feast to all who shall accept his gracious invitations—~~***

The Church, collectively, is "the Lamb's bride;" but individual believers are the guests invited to the marriage-feast. On the conversion of any soul, there is a joy diffused throughout all the angelic hosts, [Luke 15:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 15.10); and, in like manner, the union of any soul with Christ should be regarded as a signal for joy among all who "love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." On every such occasion is there, as it were, a feast prepared; and guests are invited to partake of it. It is an occasion worthy of a feast: for then all the purposes of God respecting that soul are, in great measure, accomplished.

As far as relates to that soul, the Redeemer himself receives the recompense of all that he has done and suffered for us; yes, "he sees of the travail of his own soul, and is satisfied." The soul was indeed "given unto Christ" from all eternity, and in that respect may be considered as "betrothed unto him." But, when the soul surrenders up itself to Christ, and is united unto him by faith, then does it "become one spirit with Christ. [1 Corinthians 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 6.17)," and partakes of all that Christ himself possesses.

Now, if among men a union of any person with his bride is judged worthy of feasting and congratulation among all their friends, much more may the union before contemplated, even that of a believing soul and the Lord Jesus Christ, be fitly considered as a ground of most exalted joy.

But that which the text speaks of, is not so much the feast, as,

***~~II. The blessedness of all who partake of it—~~***

Many reasons may be assigned why the guests at such a feast should be happy:

***~~1. They have the felicity of seeing the Bridegroom, and of hearing his voice—~~***

John tells us how highly he himself esteemed this privilege: "He who has the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. [John 3:29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.29)." And who can tell what it is to have such communion with him, unless he have first himself been admitted to it? Who but the believer can comprehend aright that declaration of John, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. [1 John 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.3)," Truly this is "a joy with which the stranger intermeddles not;" it is "unspeakable and glorified. [1 Peter 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.8);" even a pledge of Heaven itself.

***~~2. They partake of the highest enjoyment of which, in this fallen state, their souls are capable—~~***

The terms in which the feast itself is described may give us some idea of this: it is "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. [Isaiah 25:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 25.7)."

But hear the testimony of a guest: "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies: you anoint my head with oil: my cup runs over. [Psalm 23:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 23.5)."

Hear another testimony: "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste. He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love. [Song 2:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Song 2.3-4)." But why should we attend to individual details? However strongly they may express themselves, they can never convey to us any adequate idea of their bliss: for we are expressly told, that "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him. [1 Corinthians 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.9)."

**3.** The blessedness which they begin to taste on earth shall be perfected and continued to all eternity in Heaven—

There shall the table be spread again, and every believer be admitted to it. There are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, feasting before the Lord: there is Lazarus sitting next to Abraham himself: and there shall all true believers sit down with them: and the viands, of which they here obtained a taste, shall, with infinitely augmented zest, be partaken of by them to the full, through all eternity. But who shall paint the blessedness of that state? If even *here*the believer's joy is "unspeakable," what shall it *there*be? But we must be content to wait for our summons there: for, in attempting to describe that bliss, we only "darken counsel by words without knowledge."

***~~Application—~~***

***~~1. Those who are disposed to decline the invitation given them—~~***

You make excuses, which you now judge sufficient to justify your contempt of the mercy shown you. But your "making light of it" is viewed with other eyes by the heavenly Bridegroom. He feels that you are offering to him the greatest indignity: and he declares, that "you shall never taste of his supper," but shall be forever excluded from it, and be left in outer darkness to bewail your fate. O! who can declare what your feelings will then be? and what weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, will be your portion for evermore? Bring not on yourselves, my dear brethren, this awful judgment. I am sent, not only to *invite*, but to "*compel*you to come in." O that I knew how to address you, so that I might at last prevail! "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat that which is good; and let your souls delight themselves in fatness. [Isaiah 55:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.2)."

***~~2. Those who are willing to accept it—~~***

Come without delay, lest the door should be closed, and your exclusion be forever sealed. If you say, "I am afraid to come, because I do not possess a wedding-garment;" I answer, The Bridegroom himself has provided garments for all his guests; and if only you seek one from him, it shall not be withheld. Not only will he put upon you that justifying righteousness which he himself wrought out for you by his obedience unto death, but he will "make you all glorious within," and render you fully fit for the enjoyment of his presence, and the everlasting possession of his glory.

It may seem, perhaps, that we are speaking more than we are authorized to declare. But indeed it is not so: for "these are the true sayings of God," as my text informs you: and you shall find them true, if you will accept the invitation now sent you, and cast yourselves on him, in a firm reliance on his word. "Faithful is He who calls you; who also will do it." Only come to him "in faith;" and you may rest assured that "not one good thing shall fail you, of all that he has ever promised."

#2525

***~~THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS~~***

***~~[Revelation 19:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.10)~~***

At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

GOD is known by the works which he has made; on every one of which there is an impress of Omnipotence.

Nor is his agency less visible in the suspension of the *laws of nature*(as they are called), than in the formation of them. Hence the miracles wrought by our blessed Lord were always appealed to as undeniable attestations to his character, and decisive evidences of his divine mission.

There is yet a third mark of a divine interposition, which is not at all inferior to either of the former; I mean, the accomplishment of prophecy. In some respects this species of proof seems superior to the others, because its weight is continually increasing; while that of creation is stationary; and that arising from miracles loses half its force, as soon as the spectators of those miracles are taken from us. On this account, perhaps, it is called "a more sure word of prophecy." Certain it is, that God rests on this his exclusive claim to divine honor; and challenges the gods of the heathen to evince their title to divinity by one single proof of their prescience. [Isaiah 41:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.23).

From this conviction, John fell at the feet of the angel who had revealed so many things to him, and began to render him that worship which was due from a creature to his Creator. But the angel undeceived him; and forbad him to execute his purpose; because he was only the servant and messenger of Jehovah, to whom alone such honor was due. "I am your fellow-servant," says he: "Worship God. For the testimony of Jesus," which you have so copiously heard from me, is not mine, but is sent to you by the Spirit of prophecy," that is, by the Spirit of God, from whom alone all prophetic knowledge proceeds: he therefore, and he alone, is to receive any such tribute at your hands.

This appears to be the scope and meaning of the words before us: in our further explanation of which we shall show,

***~~I. That to testify of Jesus is the great end of all prophecy—~~***

The lines of prophecy are indeed exceeding various; yet do they all meet in one common center, the Lord Jesus Christ. [John 1:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.45) and [Acts 10:42-43](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 10.42-43) and [John 5:39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.39). In some view or other, the application of prophecy to him will always be found just: it may respect him more immediately or more remotely; but Him it always does respect; and it presents us with a clear compendious view of,

***~~1. His nature and character—~~***

It represents him as "Emmanuel, God with us," even "the mighty God;" and at the same time informs us that he should be "a Child born, a Son given;" and that being born of a pure virgin, he should be "a man, Jehovah's fellow."

Such does it represent *his nature to be perfect God and perfect man*; and his character it describes in all its parts. He was to be infinitely holy, "loving righteousness, and hating iniquity." His wisdom also was to be infinite; for he was to have "a spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and of might, of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and was to be quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord." He was to be meek and lowly, so as "not to break a bruised reed or quench the smoking flax;" and tenderly compassionate, "carrying the lambs in his bosom, and gently leading them that were with young." He was to be invincibly patient also, being, like "a lamb led to the slaughter, or sheep before her shearers, silent;" he gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. In short, he was to be "fairer than ten thousand, and altogether lovely."

***~~2. His work and offices—~~***

He was to be the "ever-living Redeemer," who should "give redemption to his people," and by the blood of his covenant should bring up his prisoners out of the pit wherein there is no water." In order to execute this work, he was to be "a Prophet like unto Moses," who would "give light to the Gentiles" as Moses had done to the Jews, and "whose instructions the whole world at the peril of their souls must hear." He was also, as a Priest, to make, not beasts, but "his own soul, an offering for sin;" "to have our iniquities laid on him;" to be himself "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities;" yes, "to be cut off, but not for himself;" and thus to "make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in an everlasting righteousness."

He was also to "make intercession for transgressors;" and by presenting himself before the mercy-seat as "the Lord our Righteousness," he was entirely to "make an end of sin," so that "in him all the seed of Israel might be justified and might glory."

He was also, as a King, to be "set on God's holy hill of Zion;" and to be enthroned "at God's right hand, until all his enemies would be made his footstool." Whatever had before reduced his people to "captivity, he was to lead captive," and to reign over "a people rendered willing and obedient in the day of his power."

***~~3. His kingdom and glory—~~***

The rise and fall of other kingdoms are often the subjects of prophecy, but it is only because of their relation to the kingdom of Christ. The smallest things that relate to that are deemed of sufficient importance to occupy a very large space; in the sacred writings, while the numberless events which appear great in our eyes are passed over without the least notice. But the truth is, that "Christ is all, and in all;" His kingdom alone is regarded by God; and nothing has any real importance but in proportion to the connection which it has with that. The empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome are mentioned as successively to flourish for an appointed season; but that of Christ was afterwards to be established on the ruins of them all, and "to stand forever;" "to Him should be given dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: His dominion is to be an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

What we read of respecting the destruction of antichrist and all his adherents, is all with a view to the ultimate enlargement and universal establishment of the Messiah's empire, that "He may be King over all the earth, and that there may be one Lord, and his name one."

Now these prophecies have been delivered in a variety of ways; but it is certain,

***~~II. That that testimony, by whoever delivered, proceeds only from the Spirit of God—~~***

The angel who instructed John, told him, that the testimony which he had given of Jesus proceeded from "the Spirit of prophecy." This is universally true. From him proceeds,

***~~1. The revelation of it to the world—~~***

What was the substance of the prophetic declarations, Peter tells us; "The prophets testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." By whose agency also they were made known, he tells us; it was "the Spirit of Christ;" and so far were the prophets from being the authors of their own report, that they were forced "to inquire and search diligently what the Spirit of Christ who was in them did signify."

In another place, he extends this observation to all the prophets from the beginning of the world: "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." Of the whole sacred volume also Paul affirms the same: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

What the motives were which induced God thus to reveal his purposes to men, we are at no loss to declare. He did it, first, to prepare the world for the reception of the Messiah; next, to point out that Messiah when he was to come, so that no possibility of doubt could exist respecting him; and, lastly to make us know infallibly, that all which he has revealed respecting the ultimate state of the righteous and the wicked shall surely be fulfilled in its season.

***~~2. The manifestation of it to the souls of men—~~***

Man can no more apply the prophecies with power to his own soul, than he could have suggested them from his own mind. He must have a spiritual discernment given him before he can know the things of the Spirit, [1 Corinthians 2:11-14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.11-14). Could the prophecies alone have enlightened the mind of man, Paul, who was so conversant with them, would have been convinced by them. But he knew not Christ, until "it pleased God to reveal his Son in him," and "to open his understanding to understand the Scriptures;" thus also was "the testimony of Christ confirmed by the Holy Spirit in" the Christians at Corinth. [1 Corinthians 2:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 2.5-6). And in like manner the Holy Spirit still "testifies of Christ. [John 15:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.26);" yes, it is his office to do so, even to "glorify Christ, by taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto us." Without his agency, the external publication of the Gospel would have no effect: "Paul might plant, and Apollos water, to no purpose, unless God interposed to give the increase."

***~~We may LEARN then from this subject,~~***

***~~1. With what view we should study the Scriptures—~~***

If the end of them all be to testify of Christ, then must we search them, in order to obtain or grow in the knowledge of Christ. It is of no use to amuse ourselves with studying the prophecies, unless we be led by them to believe in Christ, to put our trust in him as the only Savior of the world, and to commit all our concerns to his wise and gracious disposal. All that has been accomplished, or is now accomplishing, or yet remains to be accomplished—must lead us to realize the thought of his superintending providence, and convince us that not one jot or tittle that he has spoken shall ever fail. Eternity shall give an infallible exposition of all that has been revealed, and every soul of man attest its truth.

***~~2. In what manner we should study them—~~***

We should study them not as the word of man, but as the word of God; we should study them with humble fervent prayer; we should beg that God would "open our eyes to see the wondrous things of his law," and "give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ." If we lean to our own understandings, we shall err: but if we seek the teaching of God's Spirit, "he will give us the anointing of the Holy One, who shall teach us all things;" he will shine into our hearts "to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "The meek he will guide in judgment, the meek he will teach his way."

***~~3. To whom we should give the glory, if we be savingly instructed by them—~~***

We cannot take it to ourselves, for "no man can say that Jesus is the Christ, but by the Holy Spirit." Nor are we to give it to the instrument, whether he be man or angel; for he is but an instrument, a servant of the living God. He may be, he ought to be, "esteemed very highly in honor for his work's sake;" but we must never rob God of his glory to give it to a creature. Is any of you disposed to idolize the creature? "See you do it not." "Worship God," and God only; for the testimony which you have received concerning Jesus Christ is not our testimony, but God's: "the Spirit of prophecy" revealed it, and the "Spirit of prophecy" applied it to your hearts and consciences: to him therefore be ascribed exclusively, and at all times, the praise, the honor, and the glory for evermore.

#2526

***~~CHRIST THE KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS~~***

***~~[Revelation 19:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.16)~~***

He has on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS!

Of all the Apostles none seem to have been so highly favored as John. While yet Jesus was on earth, John was characterized above all others as *the Disciple whom Jesus loved*; and, after his exaltation to Heaven, John was preserved in the world many years longer than any other Apostle, and was honored with a multitude of visions declarative of the state of the Church to the remotest period of time.

The vision contained in the context foretells the destruction of antichrist in the latter days, and the consequent establishment of Christ's kingdom upon earth. The person riding upon a white horse as a mighty Conqueror, is the Lord Jesus Christ himself; who is before described as having "eyes like a flame of fire," and "a sharp sword going forth out of his mouth. Compare [Revelation 19:12-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.12-15) with [Revelation 1:14-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 1.14-16);" who is beyond all doubt "the word of God. Compare [Revelation 19:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.13) with [John 1:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.1), [14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.14)," and whose name is truly "Wonderful;" being incomprehensible to any except himself and his eternal Father. Compare [Revelation 19:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 19.12) with [Isaiah 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 9.6) and [Matthew 11:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.27). In noticing that part of the description which is contained in the text, there are two things to be considered**:**

***~~I. The NAME by which he is called—"KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS!"~~***

The august title which is here given to Christ denotes,

***~~1. His universal dominion—~~***

The kings and lords of this world have only a limited sway: they rule over a certain tract of country and a certain portion of mankind, but they are independent of each other. But Jesus Christ rules over all of them: they are all his vassals, and more entirely subject to his will than the lowest of their servants are to theirs. There is not a principality or power in earth, or Heaven, or Hell, that is not altogether dependent upon him. He has "a name given him that is above every name, [Philippians 2:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 2.9-11);" "he is Heir and Lord of all [Hebrews 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 1.2);" "and he does according to his will in the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; nor can any stay his hand or say unto him: What are you doing? [Daniel 4:35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 4.35)."

It is true that there are many who are enemies to him, and rebels against his authority: but though they think to break his bands asunder and cast away his cords from them, he "has his hook in their nose and his bridle in their jaws," and says to them, as he does to the sea, "Hitherto shall you come, but no further." *They all unwittingly fulfill his will, even while they labor most to counteract it: and, when they seem most to prevail against him, they accomplish only his secret purposes*. [Exodus 9:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 9.16); [Isaiah 10:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 10.5-7), [15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isaiah 10.15). His dominion over his Church in particular, might also be here opened, together with the manner in which he protects his people, and reigns in all their hearts [Ephesians 1:20-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.20-23).

***~~2. His proper Godhead—~~***

The **name**here given to Christ is that which belongs to the one supreme God. [Deuteronomy 10:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 10.17), and to him alone. 1 Timothy 6:15-16. And well may it be given to him, since there is not any other name of the Deity which he does not bear. [Isaiah 40:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 40.3) with [Mark 1:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark 1.1-3). The mighty God. [Isaiah 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 9.6).

Nor is there any **divine attribute**which he does not possess. Eternity, [Micah 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Micah 5.2).

Omnipresence, [Matthew 28:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 28.20).

Omniscience, [John 21:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 21.17).

Omnipotence, [Matthew 28:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 28.18).

Nor is there any **honor**peculiar to the Deity, which he does not receive. [Acts 7:59](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 7.59). [John 14:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.1). [John 5:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.23).

We may be assured therefore that Jesus is not a mere subordinate King, but "God over all, blessed for evermore! [Romans 9:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.5)."

While the text proclaims his name, it leads us very particularly to notice,

***~~II. The MANNER in which it is manifested—~~***

Whether the inscription of his name upon "his vesture" refer to any custom of that nature that obtained among great men or conquerors, we cannot say: but the inscription of it upon "his thigh" must certainly mean that his name was written upon his sword, which hung upon his thigh, [Psalm 45:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 45.3).

Of the general import of the passage we have no doubt: his "vesture dipped in blood," denoted his past victories. [Isaiah 63:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 63.1-4), and his sword hanging upon his thigh, denoted his state of preparation for future triumphs; the inscription therefore altogether means,

***~~1. That he has manifested his power in his PAST victories—~~***

Jesus has already given abundant proofs of his almighty power and universal dominion. Look at Pharaoh and his hosts; how vain was their opposition to him; how signal and complete their ruin! Behold the seven nations of Canaan; how they melted before him as snow before the meridian sun! See his once highly favored people the Jews; how he has verified his word towards them, "wiping Jerusalem as a dish, and turning it upside down. [2 Kings 21:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Kings 21.13)."

Look at all his enemies in every age. Have they prevailed? Is not His cause still triumphant? and have not multitudes of his enemies already been made his footstool? Yes, not only *Julian the apostate*, but thousands and tens of thousands have been forced to acknowledge the power of Jesus, and, with the affrighted Bethshemites, to cry, "Who shall stand before this holy Lord God. [1 Samuel 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Sam 6.20)," If then the "Lord is known by the judgments which he executes [Psalm 9:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 9.16)," then our blessed Savior has made known in this very way his eternal power and Godhead.

***~~2. That he will manifest it in his FUTURE victories—~~***

There is a time coming when Jesus shall put forth his almighty power, and "subdue all nations to the obedience of faith." In the words following our text, he declares how extensive shall be his victories, and that all who oppose him shall be as wax before the fire. His victories here will be easy, certain, terrible. [Isaiah 25:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 25.10-11). [Psalm 7:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 7.11-13). [Deuteronomy 32:41-42](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 32.41-42).

But what if we look into the eternal world? O what proofs shall we there see of his irresistible, almighty power: [Psalm 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 11.6); [Psalm 21:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 21.8-9). Let us be assured of this, that, though we be kings and lords, we must become his subjects; and that, if we will not bow to the scepter of his grace, "we shall be broken in pieces, as a potter's vessel."

***~~Inferances—~~***

***~~1. How deeply are we concerned to know whether Christ is our King!~~***

We must not imagine that he is our King, merely because we profess ourselves his subjects. We must inquire whether we have been translated from the kingdom of Satan, and brought as strangers into the kingdom of Christ. [Colossians 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 1.13). We must also inquire, Whether we are living in obedience to him? For there is nothing more certain, than that "his servants and subjects we are to whom we obey. [Romans 6:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 6.16). [John 15:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.14)." If we are not his, there can be no doubt whose we are: and therefore we should labor to ascertain the point, and to have our evidence clear that "we are Christ's."

***~~2. How awful will it be to be found among his enemies!~~***

"We may be sure, whoever we are, that he will overcome at last;" his name is a pledge of universal conquest. [Revelation 17:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 17.14). [Luke 19:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 19.27). *How terrible will be the wrath of the Lamb.*[Revelation 6:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 6.16)! O let us kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and we perish from the way. [Psalm 2:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 2.12).

***~~3. How secure are all his faithful subjects!~~***

Other kings may be subdued; but He never can: other kings may bring the heaviest calamities upon their subjects; He will bring nothing to them but peace and joy. "None can harm us, if we are his followers." "If He be for us, none can be effectually against us." "Let the children of Zion therefore be joyful in their King. [Psalm 149:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 149.2)." Yes, to all his subjects we will say, with David, "The Lord is King over all the earth; sing praises with understanding. [Psalm 47:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 47.7)."

#2527

***~~THE FIRST RESURRECTION~~***

***~~[Revelation 20:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 20.6)~~***

Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection.

RESPECTING the events spoken of in my text, and which are generally known under the name of *the Millennium*, commentators have been greatly divided. What has been spoken on the subject by wild enthusiasts, I shall pass over without notice: but the two leading opinions of pious and judicious men may fitly come under our review:

1. Some have thought that there will really be a resurrection of saints and martyrs, who shall again live upon the earth a thousand years, and that the Lord Jesus Christ also will come down from Heaven to reign over them during that period.

2. Others conceive the resurrection to be altogether figurative, and that it imports no more, than that for the space of a thousand years there will arise a succession of holy men, resembling the saints and martyrs of former ages: and that the *spiritual kingdom of Christ*will for that period be established upon the face of the whole earth.

I confess that, in my opinion, this latter sentiment is by far the more just and scriptural; and, feeling that persuasion, I will endeavor to show you,

***~~I. What we are to understand by the first resurrection—~~***

The whole of the book of Revelation is confessedly mystical and figurative; and, if we interpret this passage in a literal sense, we make it essentially to differ from every other part. In confirmation of the view which I have of the first resurrection, as being not a literal, but only a mystical and figurative resurrection, I would observe,

***~~1. That the words do not by any means of necessity require to be taken in a literal sense—~~***

It is well known that a spiritual change is often spoken of in the Scriptures as a resurrection from the dead: we are said to be quickened when "dead in trespasses and sins;" and to have "passed thereby from death unto life. [Ephesians 2:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.1). [1 John 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.14)." In several places, where the terms are quite as strong, or even stronger than those in the text, no one ever thought of putting a literal interpretation. When the Prophet Hosea says, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he has torn, and he will heal us; he has smitten, and he will bind us up: after two days will he revive us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. [Hosea 6:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hos 6.1-2);" everyone understands him as speaking of a spiritual resurrection.

The language used by the Prophet Ezekiel is yet more to our purpose. He represents the Jewish nation as not only dead, but as so long dead, that their very bones are scattered on the earth, and almost pulverized. And he speaks of their bones being re-united, each to its kindred bones, and the whole covered with flesh, and every body animated again by a living spirit which has entered into them, and restored them to life. [Ezekiel 37:1-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 37.1-10). But did ever anyone understand him as speaking of a literal resurrection?

It may be said, that, in our text, particular persons are specified, even those who have died as martyrs in the cause of Christ, and that therefore the text must be literally applied to them. I answer, that it is not of them personally that the Apostle speaks, but of persons resembling them in mind and spirit; just as Elijah is said to have come to introduce the Messiah, because John the Baptist "came in the spirit and power of Elijah. Compare [Malachi 4:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 4.5) with [Matthew 11:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 11.14); [Matthew 17:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 17.12) and [Luke 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 1.17)."

And, if we make their resurrection personal, we must then regard the resurrection of the wicked also as personal, of whom it is said, that, "when the thousand years shall be finished, the rest of the dead will live again verse 5." But did ever any one suppose that the wicked would rise to live on earth again?

Yet, if the pious dead, who have been slain by the sword of martyrdom, are literally to rise and reign on earth a thousand years, the ungodly dead, who have been slain by the avenging sword of the Almighty, must literally, and in their own persons, rise at the expiration of that time; and they, beyond all doubt, are spoken of symbolically, as designating, not individual persons, but persons of their spirit and character.

This shows that we must understand verse 4 also, not in a literal, but in a symbolical sense, as designating persons who resemble the martyrs of old time. The same mode of explication must apply to both; if the one be taken literally, so must the other be. Both must be literal, or both symbolical. And this quite, as it appears to me, determines the point at issue.

But shall any, whether the risen martyrs, or others resembling them, live, and reign "a thousand years?" No: there is no reason to think that their lives shall be protracted to any such length: but there shall be a succession of saints during that period: and as that succession will be uninterrupted through that whole time, they are said to live through that time; because, though they do not personally live, their piety does live, and is transmitted unimpaired through all the successive generations that shall arise.

It is in this sense that the two witnesses who prophesy in sackcloth, are said to "prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore prophetic days, (or years). [Revelation 11:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 11.3)." It relates not to their persons, but to others rising in continued succession in their spirit, to bear the same testimony. Indeed of them also is it said, that "they were overcome by their enemies and killed; and that their death caused exceeding great joy; but that, after three days (years) and an half, to the utter dismay of their enemies, they rose and lived again. [Revelation 11:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 11.7); [Revelation 11:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 11.10-11)."

But no one ever imagined, that this was fulfilled literally; every one understands this of a succession of prophets who arose to bear the same testimony as they had borne who had suffered martyrdom for their fidelity: and in the same manner must the resurrection of the saints also, and their reigning for a thousand years, be understood of a continued succession of eminently pious persons reigning with Christ over all the enemies of their salvation; while the ungodly shall have no successors until the expiration of that time.

In any other sense than this, it would be extremely difficult to make this passage agree with what is spoken of the resurrection in other parts of Scripture; for *the resurrection is always represented as taking place all at once*, except that the godly will rise first, before those who shall then be alive upon the earth shall be changed. 1 Corinthians 15:51-53. [1 Thessalonians 4:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 4.15-17); but in the sense we have annexed to it, it accords exactly with the language of Paul, when he says, "If the casting away of the Jews be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead. [Romans 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 11.15)." If it be thought, that this similarity of metaphor will occasion confusion in the sense, let it be remembered, that our blessed Lord used the very same terms to express the conversion of souls to him now, and their rising again to judgment in the last day: "Truly, truly, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live.…Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; those who have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and those who have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. [John 5:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.25); [John 5:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.28-29)."

Here our Lord distinguishes the two resurrections, both effected by his almighty power; the one upon the souls of men, and the other on their bodies: the one in order to their reigning with him on earth, (for "they are made kings and priests unto God;") and the other, in order to their reigning with him in glory.

Thus the very terms themselves are best explained in reference to a spiritual resurrection; while, if taken in a literal sense, they would establish a doctrine not found in any other part of Holy Writ. To all of which I may add, that the text speaks only of their souls living, which is never once in all the Scriptures used to designate the resurrection of the body.

In confirmation of the foregoing statement, I proceed to observe,

***~~2. That the event which a literal sense of them would establish, is neither probable nor desirable—~~***

One cannot conceive that the saints in glory should be brought down from Heaven, where their happiness is complete and without alloy, and be placed again in a situation where they must be encompassed with infirmities, and be subjected even to death itself; or that the Savior should leave his bright abodes, to sojourn here again in a tabernacle of clay for the space of a thousand years.

If indeed he had plainly declared such an event, we would most readily submit to his all-wise determinations, and should expect assuredly that he would ultimately be glorified by it: but, when there is no other passage of Scripture that sanctions such an idea; and all similar expressions have confessedly a spiritual import; and the spiritual or figurative sense accords with innumerable other declarations of Holy Writ—I cannot hesitate about the true interpretation of the words, or about the expectations which they teach me to form respecting the glory of the latter day.

In this view of the passage I am confirmed by the circumstances which will take place at the close of the Millennium: "Satan will then be loosed out of his prison, and will go forth to deceive the nations, and to gather them together to battle, the number of whom will be as the sand of the sea. And with these he will compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire will come down from God out of Heaven to devour them, verse 7–9."

Now all this I can understand, on the supposition that there be a succession of saints for a thousand years; because I can easily conceive that hypocrites and apostates may at last arise from among them, just as they did from among the immediate converts of the Apostles. But I cannot possibly conceive, either that Satan should so prevail over saints that are brought down from Heaven, as to occasion them at last to be cut off by fire from Heaven; or that, though preserved faithful to their God, they should ever be subjected to such assaults from men and devils.

We are told expressly, that "the sun shall not light on them, nor any heat," and that "they shall have no more sorrow, or crying, or pain;" and therefore I cannot but conclude, that they shall be with Christ in Paradise, until they shall come forth at the last day to be reunited to their bodies, and to possess both in body and soul the inheritance provided for them from the foundation of the world.

With such a view of the first resurrection, we are prepared to contemplate,

***~~II. The BLESSEDNESS of those that shall have a part in it—~~***

"Blessed and holy" will they all be; and that too in a pre-eminent degree above the saints of other ages:

***~~1. Their VIEWS will be more enlarged—~~***

Our light far surpasses that of the prophets: insomuch that the least and least of the saints under the Christian dispensation excels in that respect even the Baptist himself, who was greater than all the prophets: and among ourselves, some have far deeper and richer views of divine truth than others.

But in that day, the great mystery of redemption will be exhibited in far brighter colors than it has yet been. Not that any fresh revelation will be given to men; for I conceive that the canon of Scripture is closed: but there will be a more abundant measure of the Spirit poured out upon them, revealing to them the Savior, in all "the brightness of his glory," and in "the incomprehensible wonders of his love;" "the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun seven-fold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord binds up the breach of his people, and heals the stroke of their wound, [Isaiah 30:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.26)."

***~~2. Their GRACES will be more vigorous—~~***

They will be "blessed and holy;" and blessed, because holy. This indeed will be a necessary consequence of the foregoing; for the more "any man beholds the Savior's glory, the more will he be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of our God. [2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 3.18)." The whole vineyard of the Lord will then be watered more abundantly; and such "showers of blessings" will be poured out upon it, that every plant in it will grow, and "be fruitful in all the fruits of righteousness, to the praise and glory of our God."

We may form some idea of their state from what is recorded of the saints on the day of Pentecost: what exalted piety did they manifest towards both God and man! So will it be also in *that*day: "for brass they will have gold, and for iron silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron. [Isaiah 60:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.17);" and that prayer of the Apostle will in a more ample measure be answered to them; "The God of peace, who brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, will make them perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in them that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ. [Hebrews 13:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 13.20-21)."

***~~3. Their CONSOLATIONS will be more abundant—~~***

As their communications from God will be increased, so will their fellowship with him be more intimate and abiding. Their communion with each other also will be most profitable and endearing. Wherever they turn their eyes, they will behold a brother, or a sister, a partaker of the same faith, an heir of the same glory. If even now the communion of the saints be so sweet, that it is almost a foretaste of Heaven itself—then what will it be in that day, when the loveliness of each, and the disposition of all to exercise the principle of love, will be so greatly augmented?

And what will the ordinances be in that day? What, but "the very gate of Heaven?" Methinks, the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit will then be a daily occurrence; and the language of earth be like that of Heaven, one continued effusion of praise and thanksgiving.

The descriptions given of that period in the Scriptures are precisely similar to those which are given of Heaven itself; because the state of the Church then will be an emblem, and a pledge of Heaven. So happy will they be in their fellowship with God, that "the sun will be no more their light by day, neither for brightness will the moon give light unto them; but the Lord will be unto them an everlasting light, and their God their glory. Compare [Isaiah 60:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.19) with [Revelation 21:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.23) and [Revelation 22:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 22.5)."

***~~4. Their PROGRESS will be more easy—~~***

"Satan will then be bound, and sealed up in the bottomless pit, so that he can have no access to harass and deceive them, verse 2, 3." Now it is well known, that this subtle enemy presents more formidable obstacles in the Christian's way than all other enemies together; as the Apostle says, "We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. [Ephesians 6:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 6.12)." How rapid then will be the progress of those who have not this tide to stem, and at the same time are carried forward by breezes the most favorable that Heaven can bestow, and amply sufficient to fill all their sails!

To this subject we may well apply that beautiful description which the Prophet Amos has given of that period, "Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that sows seed; and the mountains shall drop wine, and all the hills shall melt. [Amos 9:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Amos 9.13)." For in a spiritual, as well as temporal view, so fruitful shall be the seasons, that the blessings of Heaven shall almost supersede the labors of cultivation. And all who are bending their course heavenward will fly with the celerity of "doves to their windows," and without interruption, as the clouds of Heaven. [Isaiah 60:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.8).

***~~5. Their PROSPECTS will be more glorious—~~***

Breathing thus, as they will do, the atmosphere of Heaven, they will be ever ready to take their flight, and to wing their way to their celestial abodes. From the top of Pisgah they will view their promised inheritance: and when the Lord Jesus says, "Behold, I come quickly," the united cry of all will be, "Amen! even so, come Lord Jesus. [Revelation 22:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 22.7), [20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Revelation 22.20)." In a word, their whole spirit and deportment will evince the presence, and the reign, of Christ in all their souls.

**APPLICATION**—

But may not this period be anticipated? May we not at least have the commencement of it among ourselves? Yes, surely we may. We may assuredly enjoy the dawn of that light, which they will behold in its meridian splendor. With a view to assist you in the noble enterprise of anticipating that blessed day, I would say,

***~~1. Improve the privileges which you now enjoy—~~***

These, let me say, are equal to any that have been enjoyed since the apostolic age: for the light of the Gospel shines with a splendor unknown to former ages, and is diffusing its rays to an extent which but a few years ago no human being could have contemplated. Satan indeed exerts his utmost efforts to obstruct the progress of divine truth; but he cannot succeed: he is foiled in almost every attempt; and his kingdom trembles to its center.

I need go no farther than to you, my brethren, in proof of what I have asserted. You see how the Lord Jesus Christ is extending his empire among yourselves, as well as in the world at large: and therefore you have every encouragement to fight under his banners, and to expect a successful outcome of your warfare. It is worthy of observation, that the saints of the millennial period have no distinction above you, except that "they shall reign a thousand years;" for over you "the second death shall have no power," any more than over them: and you, as well as they, are "priests of God and of Christ. Compare verse 6 with [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 2.9)."

Improve then, I say, your privileges, and seek to attain the graces that will distinguish them: they are characterized by their freedom from the pollutions of the world, and by the fidelity of their adherence to Christ, verse 4. "Be you then faithful unto death; and know assuredly that God will give you the crown of life."

***~~2. Look forward to a still better resurrection—~~***

We are ready to envy the millennial saints: but think how much more glorious a resurrection awaits you, than can possibly be enjoyed by embodied souls on earth! They will of necessity be subject to infirmities, even in their best estate: but in a little time you shall be as free from all infirmity as the angels around the throne of God! Our souls shall be altogether perfected after the Divine image, and "your bodies be made like unto Christ's glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. [Philippians 3:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.20-21)." Then "shall you be ever with the Lord," and possess in all its fullness the complete fruition of your God. Look forward with joy to that blissful period; and in the mean time, "Comfort one another with these words. [1 Thessalonians 4:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 4.17-18)."

#2528

***~~THE DAY OF JUDGMENT~~***

***~~[Revelation 20:11-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 20.11-15)~~***

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire!

WE are not to imagine that the mysterious parts of Scripture are unworthy of our most attentive perusal: for though we should not succeed in our endeavors to comprehend all that is contained in them, we shall find much that is plain, intelligible, and important.

The chapter before us speaks of a resurrection of all the martyred saints to reign with Christ on earth a thousand years: it informs us also that, at the expiration of that period, Satan shall be loosed from his confinement, and prevail against them, deceiving many, and destroying many. It tells us moreover, that God, determining to execute vengeance on that deceiver of the nations, and on such ministers as have been his instruments, and upon all those who have been deceived by them, will then come to judge the world in righteousness.

We apprehend this reign of Christ on earth, though not improbably attended with occasional manifestations of himself as on Mount Tabor, will be chiefly figurative: but, without dwelling on the points that are of difficult interpretation, and which events alone will with certainty explain, let us attend to the instruction here given us respecting that in which we are all so deeply interested, the solemnities of the day of judgment. In these we may notice,

***~~I. The appearance of the Judge—~~***

Christ is the person who shall judge the world. [Acts 17:31](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 17.31). [John 5:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.22); and he is here, as elsewhere on the very same occasion. [Romans 14:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 14.10-12) declares him to be "God," as well as man, Emmanuel, God with us. His being seated on a "throne" denotes, that from *his decisions*there will be no appeal, but that, sanctioned as they will be by the authority of the King of kings, they will be final and irreversible.

Nor is it without design that the throne is described as "white," seeing that it will exceed the meridian sun in brightness, nor ever be sullied by the smallest instance of partiality or error.

The idea of "earth and the heavens that surround it, fleeing from before his face, and no place being found for them," is calculated to impress our minds with the most solemn sense of his majesty and glory. This guilty globe was once the place of his residence, until its impious inhabitants rose up against him with one consent, and put him to death. But in that day, as though it was conscious of its own desert, it will flee from his presence; nor will any place be found for this *theater of sin*to exist any longer in its present polluted state. [2 Peter 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 3.10).

***~~II. The persons that shall be summoned to his tribunal—~~***

Not only at the deluge, when the whole world was drowned, but since that time, millions, who, for mercantile or hostile purposes, have traversed the mighty waters, have found their graves in the bosom of the ocean. But at the last day, "the sea shall give them up;" "death" also shall surrender up the bodies that have long since moldered into dust, and "hades," or the invisible world, shall deliver up the souls that have long abode in happiness or misery. All who have ever lived upon the earth, whether "small or great, shall stand before the tribunal of their God."

*The God that formed them out of nothing will collect with ease their scattered atoms, and reunite them to their kindred souls.*Every one shall appear in his own proper body, nor shall he be able either to withstand the summons, or elude the search. The king and the beggar, the sage philosopher and the child that died before it saw the light, shall be no otherwise distinguished, than as they are classed with the righteous or the wicked.

***~~III. The rule of judgment—~~***

Various "books shall then be opened" to serve as grounds of the Divine procedure. [Daniel 7:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Dan 7.9-10). The *book of God's law*, originally inscribed on the hearts of our First Parents, and still not wholly effaced even from the minds of the heathen, will be the rule by which they shall be judged, who never saw the light of revelation. [Romans 2:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 2.14-15).

The *book of the Gospel*, wherein the mysteries of redemption are unfolded to our view, will be the touchstone by which our faith and practice shall be tried. The *book of conscience*too, which now omits many things, or grossly misrepresents them, will then give a juster testimony to our conduct: for then it will be a perfect transcript of another book that shall be opened, namely, the *book of God's remembrance*. In this, every action, word, and thought, was faithfully recorded by the unerring hand of God himself: and every purpose, desire, or motive, shall have an influence on his decision to enhance our happiness—or augment our misery. [1 Corinthians 4:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 4.5).

There is yet another book, particularly specified in the text, "the *book of life*." This is none other than the book of God's decrees, wherein were written from the foundation of the world the names of his elect. And as the other books will be opened in order to vindicate the equity of his decisions, so will this, in order to display the sovereignty of his grace.

Twice is this book mentioned in the text; but twice also is it declared, that all "shall be judged according to their works;" while therefore we honor God's electing love, we must carefully dismiss every thought that may disparage his remunerative justice. Though to God's election the saints will be indebted for their salvation; the wicked will never perish through any influence of reprobation: *their happiness men will owe to him; their misery to themselves alone*.

***~~IV. The sentence that shall be executed—~~***

Nothing is expressly mentioned in the text respecting the sentence of the righteous; though it is evidently implied, that they, having their names written in the book of life, shall have a very different end from that of the ungodly. Yes; to them there is no condemnation; they shall never perish, but shall have eternal life. [Romans 8:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.1). [John 10:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 10.27-28). If indeed God should judge them by the strict tenor of his law, they must perish: but he views them as clothed in the Redeemer's righteousness; and accepts, for his sake, not their persons only, but their services, treasuring up their tears in his bottle, and noticing their very desires in order to a future recompense. [Malachi 3:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 3.16-17).

As for those whose names are *not*written in the book of life, their state will be inexpressibly awful. They, together with "death and Hell," the present receptacles of the damned, shall be "cast into the lake of fire;" in order that, except in that place, there may not remain any vestige of sin or misery in the whole creation. This is emphatically called "the second death." The pangs of dissolution are often great, and the consequent separation of soul and body very distressing: but the anguish attendant upon these is a very faint emblem of the torments that shall be endured in that state of separation from God, in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

Nor will the ungodly have any just reason to complain that their names were not written in the book of life, since they never desired to be there registered, nor ever regarded the Lamb of God, who alone could inscribe their names therein.

***~~INFERENCES—~~***

***~~1. How needful is it to secure a saving interest in Christ!~~***

We all are hastening to his judgment-seat; nor will and thing avail us there but a saving interest in his blood and righteousness. By the law we are all condemned; but by the Gospel we may all have life. Let us then not waste all our time in seeking the things that perish with the using; but rather secure an inheritance that shall never fade, and that shall continue when all earthly things shall be dissolved.

***~~2. How carefully should the professors of religion take heed to their ways!~~***

All must be judged according to their works, the quantity of which as well as the quality—will make an essential difference in our state. [Galatians 6:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gal 6.8). [2 Corinthians 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 9.6). *Every hour, as it passes, wings its way to Heaven, and records the manner in which it was spent. We are, in fact, dictating daily our own sentence, and determining the measure of our own happiness or misery*. Let us then frequently ask ourselves, what the last hour has recorded respecting us; and whether we shall be glad to see the transactions of it brought forth as evidences at the bar of judgment? God help us to bear this in mind; and so *to pass our few remaining hours, as we shall wish we had passed them, when we shall be standing naked before his tribunal!*

#2529

***~~THE HEAVENLY GLORY~~***

***~~[Revelation 21:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.1-6)~~***

Now I saw a new Heaven and a new earth, for the first Heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from Heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.

THIS passage is supposed by some to refer to the millennial period. And it is certain that that period is elsewhere spoken of under the image of new heavens and a new earth. [Isaiah 65:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 65.17); [Isaiah 66:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 66.22). But others interpret it as relating to the eternal world; which sense accords best both with the text and context.

Of the millennial era, it cannot be said that then "all tears shall be wiped away from our eyes, and that there shall be no more death;" for most distressing times will follow it; and, after it, death will proceed in its work of desolation with uninterrupted sway. Moreover, as the state of the wicked in the day of judgment is spoken of in the preceding context, it is reasonable to suppose that the state of the righteous should be mentioned also; while, if it be not adverted to in this passage, it is omitted altogether, notwithstanding this book of revelation was intended to make known the future destinies of the Church, as well as of the world, to all eternity.

Understanding therefore the vision as relating to the eternal world: Yet, as the words used by the Prophet most unquestionably relate to the millennial state, they may be so interpreted here. Perhaps the one being typical of the other, as the redemption from Babylon of our redemption by Christ, the words may be interpreted of either, as circumstances may require. Accordingly the Author has so applied them in his #on [Isaiah 65:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 65.17-18),

I will proceed to consider,

***~~I. The vision itself—~~***

The Apostle saw "a new Heaven and a new earth; the first Heaven and the first earth having passed away: and, in that new creation, there was no more sea;" all storms and tempests having ceased, and all occasions for tumultuous agitations having forever vanished.

He saw also the holy city, the new Jerusalem, that is, a model of it, "coming down from God out of Heaven;" and this city was in all respects fitted for the habitation of the most high God in the midst of all his redeemed people; "its foundations garnished with all manner of precious stones;" "its walls great and high," "its gates of pearl," "its streets of pure gold;" and "God himself and the Lamb enlightening it with their glory. verse 10–23." In a word, it was fully "prepared for its glorious inhabitants, as a bride adorned for her husband."

This vision seems to have been somewhat of the same kind with that which had formerly been given to Peter, when "a great sheet, filled with all manner of living animals, descended to him from Heaven. [Acts 10:9-16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 10.9-16)." But together with it "he heard a great voice out of Heaven," proclaiming to him the blessedness of those who should inhabit that holy city. And this calls for our more particular attention.

We see here,

***~~1. The source of that heavenly bliss—~~***

God dwelt, by a visible symbol of his presence, in his tabernacle and temple of old. He was in a peculiar manner the God of Israel; and they were in a peculiar manner his people. In his Church, and among his true Israel, he dwells also at this time; manifesting himself to them as he does not unto the world; and communicating to them a fullness of all spiritual blessings. And as by this glorious distinction his people of old were elevated above the heathen, so are his *spiritual Israel*now distinguished above all other people upon the face of the earth; possessing . . .

a knowledge of God's *will*,

an enjoyment of his *presence*,

a sense of his *love*, and

an experience of his *power*,

which no other creature out of Heaven does, or can possess.

But in Heaven God displays all the full radiance of his glory. He is seen there, not in a mere symbol, like the bright cloud, nor through the dim vision of faith; but clearly, as with our bodily organs we behold the sun in the firmament. Nor are his communications there any longer partial, scanty, and occasional; but constant and full, according to the measure of every one's capacity to receive them.

The consciousness which every one will then have of his interest in God; of the relation which he bears to him; and of the indissolubleness of that bond which has united him to God; O! what a source of joy will this be! But on a subject like this, "we only darken counsel by words without knowledge."*We have no conception of the presence of God*. A new-born infant is not less capable of appreciating the sublime exercises and enjoyments of spiritual perception, than we are of comprehending the felicity of beholding God face to face.

***~~2. The perfection of that heavenly bliss—~~***

The *negative felicity*of Heaven comes more within the grasp of our feeble minds. We know here, by sad experience, what pain and sorrow mean: and frequent are the occasions on which tears flow down our cheeks. Death too, that king of terrors, warns us of the pains which we shall speedily endure in our conflicts with him. *This whole world is little else than a valley of tears*. At best it is a chequered scene, and sorrows are continually intermingled with our joys.

But in Heaven there will be no more pain, or sorrow, or crying: our happiness will be uninterrupted, and without alloy. Nor will there be any termination of it; for "there will be no more death." Whatever tears bedewed our cheeks in our departing hours, they will all be wiped away by God himself; who will, from the instant of our entrance into his presence, seat us on his throne, and put an unfading crown of glory upon our head, and invest us with all the glory and felicity of his kingdom.

When joy and gladness have thus taken possession of our souls, not only will "sorrow and sighing flee away," but all occasion for them, all scope for the exercise of them, will vanish forever. O beloved, what a rapturous state will this be! Would to God we were able to speak of it as we ought! But we feel the subject far too great for our feeble grasp.

Lest this vision should appear to exceed what will ever be realized, let me draw your attention to,

***~~II. The confirmation of the vision—~~***

"God, in giving us his covenant, confirmed it with an oath, in order that we might have the stronger consolation;" so here, he confirmed this vision to the Apostle by an audible voice, declaring that the things which he had seen,

***~~1. Were really true—~~***

"Behold, I make all things new. Write; for these words are true and faithful." God would have this vision recorded for the benefit of the Church: nor would he have any part of it doubted: for everything which had been spoken respecting it was true, and might be fully relied on.

Now this at first sight appears to have been superfluous: but it was in reality no more than what our necessities required. When the soul is bowed down with pains and sorrows, it needs support: and there is no support equal to that which this vision affords. *Our trials are but for a time; eternity is near at hand; the very troubles which we are called to endure, are subservient to our best interests, and conducive to the augmentation of our happiness to all eternity.* Look at the saints of old, and see what supported them in all their trials.

What enabled the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to leave their country and kindred, and to live as *pilgrims*and *sojourners*on the earth? "They looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. [Hebrews 11:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 11.10)."

What enabled the martyrs of following ages to sustain their accumulated afflictions? They "looked forward to the resurrection," when they should possess "better and lasting possessions. [Hebrews 10:34-35](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 10.34-35)." It is to that period that our blessed Lord teaches us to look, as affording us a rich compensation for all that we can now endure for his sake. [Matthew 5:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 5.12). And it is the prospect of eternal felicity which reconciles all the Lord's people to the diversified afflictions of this present life. Hence it was necessary that we should have the fullest testimony respecting the certainty and the excellency of that heavenly state.

Know then, that state does indeed await you: know, that "light is sown for the righteous;" and "though weeping may endure for a night, joy will come in the morning."

***~~2. Were in actual existence—~~***

The voice which attested the truth of these things, added also, "It is done." The very glory of which the vision spoke, is actually begun. Thousands and millions are already in possession of it. What a blessed thought, to those especially who have been bereaved of pious friends or relatives! They are already joined to the general assembly and Church of the first-born: their spirits are already perfect; perfect in purity, and perfect also in felicity.

Think of the dying thief, when, on the very night of his crucifixion, he was received into the presence of his Lord in Paradise!

We do not wonder that "Paul desired to depart and to be with Christ," accounting that infinitely better than the happiest state on earth. Nor do we wonder that he made light of everything which stood between him and the consummation of his bliss. [Romans 8:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 8.18); [2 Corinthians 5:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.1-4); and longed for the dissolution of his earthly tabernacle, that he might have it reared anew in that better world.

It being delivered on the night of the funeral of his late Majesty George III, the audience were here led to contemplate the blessed exchange which his Majesty now experienced. And the same may be done on occasion of any one who dies in the Lord. See [Revelation 14:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 14.13). *Let us only think how near we are to that blissful state, and nothing will be able to damp our ardor, or retard our progress, in the pursuit of it.*

***~~Contemplate Heaven, then, I entreat you:~~***

***~~1. Contemplate Heaven as the main object of pursuit—~~***

What is there in the whole universe that is worthy to be put in competition with it? O! blush that you can have your heart engaged about the trifles and vanities of time and sense, and that these eternal realities occupy so little of your attention.

***~~2. Contemplate Heaven as an expectation—~~***

Can you really believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has given you a title to this blessedness, and ever be weary in the pursuit of it? The wonder is, how you can be content to live in this poor wretched world, when there is such blessedness awaiting you at your departure from it. Go and survey it from day to day: take Pisgah views of it: anticipate it: get such a sense of God's presence with you, as shall be a foretaste of it: and be daily "looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day," when you yourself shall be privileged to say, "He has made all things new."

***~~3. Contemplate Heaven as an actual fruition—~~***

Ask of "those who came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and are now in the immediate presence of their God;" ask them, Whether they regret any labors or sufferings which they ever endured in their way to that bliss. Ask them too: How, with God's help, they would live, if they were again permitted to begin their course on earth? Ask yourselves too, what thoughts you will have of your present conduct, if ever you should reach those realms of bliss? These will be profitable considerations to you: they will place all present things in their just point of view: and will aid you greatly in running the race that is set before you.

#2530

***~~GOD THE LIGHT AND TEMPLE OF THE NEW JERUSALEM~~***

***~~[Revelation 21:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.22-23)~~***

I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

"GLORIOUS things," says the Psalmist, "are spoken of you, O city of God. [Psalm 87:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 87.3)." This was true of Jerusalem, as it existed in the days of David: but far more applicable is it to the new Jerusalem; the foundations of which, indeed, have been already laid these eighteen hundred years! Whether it is of that city that John is here speaking, or of Heaven itself, has been, and still is, a subject of controversy among Christian divines. It is not without a great appearance of truth that this whole vision is considered as referring to the millennial age: for "the holy city which John saw, the New Jerusalem, came down from God out of Heaven, verse 2;" and therefore could scarcely be Heaven itself. Its foundations, and walls, and gates, are described by the very terms which are confessedly and exclusively applied by the prophets to the Church which shall be established at that period: and the flocking of all nations, with their kings and all their wealth, to this city, verse 24, 26, is the very event predicted in all the prophecies, as now fast approaching, and as ordained to continue for a thousand years.

On the other hand, it is not without strong reason that others interpret this vision as relating to Heaven itself: for the order of prophecy seems to require it.

The day of judgment, and the punishment of the wicked, having been foretold in the preceding chapter, it seems reasonable to expect that the felicity of the saints should be next described: and to come back from the day of judgment to the millennium, is to introduce confusion, where we would naturally expect to find order; and to cast a needless veil over prophecy, which, in itself, is necessarily involved in much obscurity. It is also said by these persons, that some of the expressions which are applied to this city—such as, that "there is no night or death there," and that "all former things are passed away, verse 4 and 22:5"—appear to determine the sense of the whole as pertaining, not to this world, but the next.

But perhaps the exclusive application of the subject is not right on either side: for it is indisputable that the *prophecies*in general have different periods of accomplishment. *Numberless prophecies had somewhat of a literal fulfillment in the Jewish state, and afterwards a spiritual accomplishment in the apostolic age; and are still to receive their full and final accomplishment at a period yet future.*And sometimes these different events are so intermixed (as in our Lord's description of the day of judgment, which was shadowed forth by the destruction of Jerusalem. Matthew 24), that you are necessitated to separate them according to the terms by which they are designated, rather than by any broad line of distinction observable in the prophecies themselves. While, therefore, we suppose the state of the glorified Church to be primarily intended, we apprehend that its glory is considered as commenced on earth and completed in Heaven: for, in truth, the millennial age will be Heaven, as it were, begun; and the heavenly glory will be the reign of Christ and of the saints consummated.

Understanding then our text in this view, I shall explain it,

***~~I. In reference to the millennial age—~~***

The voice of Scripture, whether in the Old Testament or the New, declares, that the period which is usually called the millennium will be a season of universal piety and most transcendent bliss. In this light it is described in my text: the saints being then pre-eminently distinguished by,

***~~1. The spirituality of their devotion—~~***

In the *Jewish*Church, there were a material temple, a visible glory, and splendid ordinances; and by these was God chiefly honored; though, in comparison of real piety, even then the outward ceremonies were of no account. But, under the *Christian*dispensation, the place and manner of approaching God are matters of comparative indifference: the spirit with which he is approached is the all in all, [John 4:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.23). Even now, at this time, God and the Lamb may be said to be the temple of our Jerusalem, by reason of the near access which his people enjoy to the more immediate presence of their God.

But, in that day there will be such an abundant effusion of the Holy Spirit upon them, that they will be brought into far nearer communion with God than has fallen to the lot of believers, either in past ages or at the present time. So devout will be their worship, that they themselves will be, as it were, the sacrifices that shall be offered, yes, and the priests too, that offer them; while the Lord Jesus Christ will be the altar on which they are presented; and the Holy Spirit, the fire that will inflame their souls, and cause fragrant odors to ascend to Heaven; their prayers and praises going up at the same time as incense before the mercy-seat, and God manifesting his acceptance of the services that are so offered. Then will be experienced, in all its fullness, that mutual indwelling of God in man, and man in God, of which the Scriptures so frequently speak, and which is surpassed only by the union of the Sacred Three in one glorious and eternal Godhead, [John 17:21](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 17.21).

***~~2. The sublimity of their joy—~~***

Under the Jewish dispensation, much stress was laid on worldly prosperity; which, in fact, constituted a very considerable portion of the blessings that were promised to God's obedient people. The influences of the sun by day, and of the moon by night, were engaged to them for their good, that no earthly comfort might be lacking to them.

But in the millennial Church, there will be no need either of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, since "God himself and the Lamb will be the light thereof." There will be wonderful discoveries of God to their souls, and such manifestations of the Savior, as now we have no conception of; so that the saints will be superior to all earthly joy; their delight in God being as great as mortality itself can either exercise or endure. Of this the prophets speak most copiously, and with the utmost plainness, particularly specifying that this is to distinguish the millennial age: "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun be seven-fold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord binds up the breach of his people, and heals the stroke of their wound. [Isaiah 30:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.26)." In another place, speaking expressly of that period, he uses yet more closely the very language of my text: "The sun shall be no more your light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto you: but the Lord shall be unto you an everlasting light, and your God your glory. [Isaiah 60:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.19)." So again, in another place, with still greater force he says, "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord shall reign in Mount Zion, and before his ancients, gloriously. [Isaiah 24:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 24.23)."

In the whole of this we cannot but see, that, as knowledge will be marvelously increased in relation to heavenly things, so also will be the happiness of those who are instructed in them. Even at the present hour there are some persons who are thus favored with the manifestations of God and of Christ to their souls; but at that day "the knowledge and enjoyment of the glory of the Lord will cover the earth, as diffusively and as deeply as the waters cover the sea. [Habakkuk 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Hab 2.14)." And, whereas it is thought that the expressions of John respecting there being "no pain in that city, and no night there, and no death," are too strong to be applied to the millennium, I must say that these very expressions are, in fact, cited from the Prophet Isaiah, who says of the millennial Church, "Your sun shall no more go down, neither shall your moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and your God your glory. [Isaiah 60:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 60.20); [Isaiah 35:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 35.10); [Isaiah 49:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 49.10)."

In somewhat of a similar, though doubtless a more exalted, sense, the words before us may be explained,

***~~II. In reference to the heavenly state—~~***

In this view they may be understood as intimating,

***~~1. That all external mediums will then be abolished—~~***

We must not forget, that the whole of this is, if not a literal citation from the Prophet Isaiah, yet so exactly corresponding with his words, as to be in fact his language; in which he conveys truths relative to the Christian Church in terms taken from things existing in the Jewish Church; and that, consequently, we must refer to the Jewish Church for our explanation of them.

Now, under the Mosaic dispensation, the temple and ordinances were the necessary means of approaching God, and of obtaining acceptance with him. But in Heaven they will be altogether superseded. There will be no need of the word to inform us, or of ministers to instruct us, or of ordinances whereby to serve God. As the Jewish ordinances, in comparison with the simpler worship of the Christian Church, were mere "beggarly elements," so the Christian ordinances will be of no account in the eternal world, by reason of the intimate and immediate communion which we shall then have with God. The high-priest within the veil had no sight of God in comparison of what we shall have; nor had the Disciples, who beheld Christ transfigured on the holy mount, any conception of his glory, in comparison of that with which our souls shall be filled, when we shall behold him face to face.

Now, we are in a measure dependent on others, as "helpers of our joy;" but then, not all the angels in Heaven can augment our enjoyment of God; nor can all the fallen angels in Hell impede it. Our knowledge of God and of Christ will be clear, certain, continued; for we shall "see them as we are seen, and know them even as we are known."

***~~2. That all created glories will be eclipsed—~~***

The stars, which afford a brilliant light by night, are no longer visible when the sun is risen, because its radiance has extinguished their fainter beams. Just so, the light which has been afforded by Prophets, or Apostles, or common ministers, will be to us no brighter than a glow-worm, when He will be then seen by us, not through the slow inductions of reason, but by an intuitive perception of his glory The crowning jewel of that blissful state is that the Lord Jesus Christ, in all the glory of his person, and in all the wonders of his love, will be made clear to us, as the sun at noon-day. "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is!" [1 John 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.2)

The angels who abide around the throne have not a more distinct view of the Godhead, nor a clearer conception of his perfections, his purposes, or his works, than we shall have, when once we are admitted to those realms of bliss; every one of us being filled according to the measure of the gift of Christ, and filled according to the utmost extent of our capacity.

***~~Behold, then,~~***

***~~1. What enjoyments we should now affect—~~***

I am no enemy to the pleasures of sense, when they are pursued with moderation, and enjoyed with a due subservience to the interests of our souls: for we are expressly told, that "God has given us all things richly to enjoy." But *we are born for higher things than this poor world can afford us.*Not even the sun or moon, nor any creature-comforts whatever, should so fascinate us with their charms, as to hear any comparison with those sublimer enjoyments which God has ordained for us, in communion with himself, and with his dear Son Jesus Christ.

Would to God that we all acted up to our professions in this respect! We are too prone to rest in external things, instead of aspiring to the possession of God and his Christ. Our worship is, for the most part, of too formal a cast, and our happiness is too much blended with what is carnal. *To soar above the world to God, and to apprehend Christ himself, with all the heights and depths of his love*—alas! alas! this is an attainment possessed by few, and even by them only at some more favored seasons. But we should rise more above the things of time and sense: we should go forth with more ardor to our God and Savior: we should soar more to Heaven, and refresh ourselves with draughts of living water from the fountain-head.

I pray you, brethren, be not satisfied with anything that this poor world can bestow. Be not satisfied without bright discoveries of the Divine glory; and especially of "the glory of God, as shining in the face of Jesus Christ;" let your fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, be daily more familiar: and let every communication you receive from them cause you to pant after yet more abundant blessings at their hands, until you shall be satisfied in their presence, wherein alone will be found the fullness of joy for evermore! Let God and the Lamb be your Heaven upon earth; and they shall be both your temple and your light to all eternity.

***~~2. What is the true state of the believing soul—~~***

Truly, with him the millennium is begun; yes, and Heaven is begun also: for where God and the Lamb are our temple and our light, there is the millennium, and there is Heaven. And is it I who say this? Says not the Scripture the same? Yes; respecting the whole body of believers it says, "You *have*come (not, you *shall*come, but, you *have*come) unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born that are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel. [Hebrews 12:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Heb 12.22-23)."

I know, indeed, that there is yet much amiss, even in the best of men; that their sun is darkened by many a cloud; and their worship is debased by much deadness and languor. But still, the believer has "joys with which the stranger intermeddles not." He is, in fact, a child, instructed and disciplined, by heavenly exercises, for heavenly enjoyments. He is now tuning his golden harp, whereon he shall play before the throne of God; and rehearsing, as it were, those heavenly songs in which he shall join with all the choir of saints and angels to all eternity.

In a word, his knowledge of God, and his enjoyment of Christ, are progressively advancing under all the diversified occurrences of life: and when he dies, he will change his place only, but not his company or his employment. "He now dwells in God, and God in him;" "he is one with Christ, and Christ with him;" and, when taken hence, it will only be, that his union with the Deity may be more entire, and his communion with him more complete!

#2531

***~~THE TREE OF LIFE~~***

***~~[Revelation 22:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 22.2)~~***

In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

THE Scripture represents divine truth to us in terms accommodated to our low and carnal apprehensions. We know nothing on earth so attractive to the eye as pompous palaces, fraught with exquisite workmanship of every kind, and especially of rare and precious stones, and enlivened with the mirthful scenes which are and nature can produce. On this account John adopts these images to convey to our minds an idea of all that is great and glorious in Heaven; having described which as a city unparalleled for beauty, he proceeds to tell us of a *river*, clear as crystal, that waters it; and of a *tree*of most wonderful qualities that adorns it.

It is our intention to show,

***~~I. What we are to understand by the tree of life—~~***

***~~It would seem that the tree mentioned in the text alludes to the tree of life which was created by God in Paradise—~~***

Some have thought that John alludes to the trees which are mentioned in Ezekiel's vision. [Ezekiel 47:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 47.12). It must be confessed that there is a striking coincidence of expression in the two passages: but the river of which Ezekiel speaks, and the trees growing on either side of it, represent the Gospel, producing life and fruitfulness wherever it flows. Whereas the tree, mentioned in the text, is expressly called "the tree of life;" and is spoken of as growing in the midst of Paradise. Now this is the exact description given us of the tree of life which was formed in Eden. [Genesis 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 2.9); to that therefore we rather suppose the reference to be made; and this idea is confirmed by various other passages, which we shall have occasion to notice.

***~~In this view Christ himself is intended under this figurative representation—~~***

The tree of life in Paradise may be considered as typical of Christ. It was a pledge to Adam, that, if he continued obedient to the end of the time appointed for his probation, he should live forever. And the reason of his being driven afterwards from that tree by cherubim with fiery swords, was that he might be compelled to seek those other means of acceptance which God had ordained, and which were shadowed forth by the tree of life. [Genesis 3:22-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.22-24).

As God in later ages destroyed Jerusalem, that his people might not be able to offer their former sacrifices, and might thereby be shut up, as it were, to that great Sacrifice which the others typified; so God dealt with our first parents in the instance alluded to. Christ is to fallen man, what the tree of life was to man in innocence; he is, under the covenant of grace, what that was under the covenant of works; that ensured life to obedience, and Christ secures it to faith in his name. He is God's pledge to us, that, if we believe on him, we shall be saved. [John 11:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 11.24-25); yes, even to those that are in Heaven he must be considered as the pledge of their everlasting stability, since it is of his fruit that they eat. [Revelation 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.7), and their life is altogether bound up in him. [Colossians 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col 3.4). [Ephesians 1:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 1.10).

That all may be persuaded to pluck the fruits of this tree, we proceed to show,

***~~II. Its transcendent excellence—~~***

It is not in beauty only that this tree excels, but in *usefulness*. It surpasses all others,

***~~1. In its FRUITS—~~***

So *abundant*are its fruits, that all in Heaven, and all on earth, may eat of them; yes, if there were as many worlds as there have been, or ever shall be, individuals in the world, there would be sufficient for them all.

But its fruits are also *various*: other trees, however fruitful, bear but one kind of fruit; but this bears "twelve manner of fruits;" whatever is suited to our different appetites, is to be derived from him: pardon, peace, love, joy, holiness, and whatever else a devout soul longs after, it is all to be found in him, and to be enjoyed through him.

Besides, it has this surprising quality, that its fruitfulness is *perpetual*: "In every month" we may behold him laden with fruit, as well in the depths of winter, as in the midst of summer; in seasons of the deepest adversity, as well as under the sunshine of prosperity: there never is a moment wherein we shall meet with such a disappointment as Christ experienced. [Matthew 21:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 21.19); we may at all times go and "sit under his shadow, and find his fruit sweet unto our taste."

***~~2. In its LEAVES—~~***

The leaves of other fruit-trees are, for the most part, worthless: but those of this tree are medicinal, and of most astonishing virtue; they are designed on purpose "for the healing of the nations." There is no wound, however deadly, but the application of a leaf from this tree will heal it instantly. As a sight of the brazen serpent cured the wounded Israelites, and a touch of our Lord's garment the diseased woman. [Numbers 21:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 21.8-9) and [Matthew 9:20-22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 9.20-22)—so will the efficacy of these leaves be made apparent, whensoever they are applied.

Nor is it one single wound that they will cure, but the whole soul, however infected in every part: as the tree, cast into the waters of Marah, healed the fountain itself, and rendered all its streams salubrious. [Exodus 15:25](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 15.25), so will a single leaf of this tree restore the most diseased soul to purity and peace. To every believer God will surely make known himself by that name which he has assumed for our encouragement, "I am the Lord that heals you. [Exodus 15:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Exod 15.26)."

***~~From hence we may LEARN,~~***

***~~1. What use we should make of Christ NOW—~~***

We cannot but feel, if we be not altogether "past feeling," that we stand in need of a Savior. And behold, what a glorious salvation God has raised up for us! Should we not then apply to this Savior? Has the Sun of Righteousness arisen with healing in his beams. [Malachi 4:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 4.2), and shall we not go forth to his light? Is there balm in Gilead, is an almighty Physician there, [Jeremiah 8:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 8.22), and shall we not seek the healing of our wounds? Shall the tree of life be accessible to us at all times, yes, shall the flaming sword be driving us to it instead of from it, and we not go to apply its leaves and eat of its fruit?

Let us, whether dying of the wounds of sin, or agonizing through the fiery darts of temptation, go to Christ without delay; for surely virtue shall come forth from him, and heal us all. [Luke 6:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 6.19). If he submitted to suffer for us that he might "heal us by his stripes. [Isaiah 53:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 53.5)," and reconcile us to God by his death, "much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. [Romans 5:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 5.10)." We may consider him as God's pledge to us, that, where he is, there shall also his servants be; and that, because he lives, we shall live also. [John 14:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.19).

***~~2. What enjoyment we shall have of Christ HEREAFTER—~~***

The words immediately following the text further confirm the sense given to the text itself. Sin entered into Paradise, and a tremendous curse followed it. But into Heaven no sin, and therefore "no curse shall ever come;" nothing shall invade the peace, nothing disturb the security, of those who inhabit that glorious city: while the tree of life continues there, all who eat of its fruits are kept from a possibility of falling. O blessed state! All feasting upon the glories of Jesus; and eternity the duration of their bliss! May we all arrive at that Paradise of God, and unite with all the choir of Heaven in singing, "Salvation to God and to the Lamb forever and ever."

#2532

***~~OBEDIENCE, THE WAY TO LIFE~~***

***~~[Revelation 22:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 22.14)~~***

Blessed are those who do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

IN the inspired volume we do not find such a rigid adherence to *systematic accuracy*as the jealousies of controversial writers have subsequently introduced. The expressions which were used under the legal dispensation have been sometimes adopted also under the Christian dispensation; and the law of faith been delivered in terms nearly assimilated to those which were characteristic of the law of works.

For instance, on one occasion, when a young man asked of our blessed Lord, "what he must do to obtain eternal life;" our Lord answered, "If you will enter into life, keep the Commandments. [Matthew 19:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 19.16-17)." Now, if this direction be taken without due explanation, it will altogether invalidate the Gospel of Christ, and supersede entirely the whole work which our blessed Savior came from Heaven to accomplish for us. The answer was given in order to convince this self-deluded man, that he neither had kept the Commandments, nor could keep them, perfectly; and that, consequently, he must seek for salvation in the way provided for him in the Gospel.

In like manner, the passage which I have just read to you must also be *explained according to the analogy of faith*. If we were to interpret it as importing, that our obedience to the Ten Commandments would entitle us to Heaven, we must set aside all that the holy Apostles have written, and go back to Moses as our only instructor; or rather, I must say, we must consign over to perdition every child of man; since God has declared, that "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. [Romans 3:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.19-20)." To prevent any such fatal mistake, I will unfold to you,

***~~I. The true nature of evangelical obedience—~~***

When the commandments are mentioned, we are apt to confine our attention to the Decalogue, that is, to the Ten Commandments which were written by God upon tables of stone, and delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai. But to us, under the Gospel, is another commandment given, and which is called in Scripture "The law of faith. [Romans 3:27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 3.27)."

To "do God's commandments" then,

***~~1. We must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—~~***

The same inspired writer, who speaks to us in the text, says, "This is God's commandment, that we should *believe*on the name of his Son Jesus Christ. [1 John 3:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 3.23)." In truth, until we have obeyed this command, all other obedience, except so far as the mere letter of the commandments, is impracticable; and, if rendered ever so perfectly, would be utterly ineffectual for our salvation. *All spiritual and acceptable obedience is the fruit of faith*. We have no strength for it, until we have believed in Christ. *It is only by grace received from Christ that we can perform anything that is truly acceptable to God*. A tree destitute of roots might as well produce its proper fruits, and in a perfect state, as we obey the law without the communication of grace from Christ to our souls. He himself has said, "Without me you can do nothing. [John 15:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 15.5)."

But, supposing we could of ourselves obey the law, even in its utmost extent, which not the most perfect man that ever lived could do, seeing that "in many things we all offend. [James 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James 3.2),") still we never could atone to God for the sins we have *already*committed: "after having done all that was required of us, we would still be only unprofitable servants. [Luke 17:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 17.10)." And therefore we must come to God through Christ, relying wholly on the merits of his death, and pleading only his perfect righteousness as the ground of our acceptance before God. [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil 3.9). Until we have obeyed this command, we are under a sentence of condemnation; which can never be reversed, but through faith in Christ. [John 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.18); [John 3:36](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 3.36).

***~~2. We must comply with the whole of His revealed will—~~***

The law of the Ten Commandments is not made void by the Gospel, nor is one of its requirements lessened in any degree. We are as much bound to love God with all our heart and soul, and to love our neighbor as ourselves, as Adam was in Paradise: nor if we have truly believed in Christ, shall we wish any one of its demands to be lowered. We shall see that law to be "holy, and just, and good" in every respect; and we shall pant after, and labor for, a perfect conformity to its every requirement. We shall not be satisfied with an external observance of its precepts: we shall aspire after the highest possible attainments; and strive, according to our ability, to be "holy as God is holy, and perfect even as our Father who is in Heaven is perfect." At the same time, our dependence will not be on our own obedience, but on the finished work of Christ; from a full conviction that there is "no other foundation on which any man can build. [1 Corinthians 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.11)," "nor any other name but His whereby any man can be saved. [Acts 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 4.12)."

Having shown what EVANGELICAL OBEDIENCE is, let me point out to you,

***~~II. The blessedness attached to it—~~***

To understand this aright, we should look to Adam in Paradise—

He, while he continued in a state of innocence, had liberty to eat of the *tree of life*, which was to him a pledge that, when his obedience should be completed, he should enter into the Paradise above. But when he had sinned, he was debarred from all access to the tree of life; because it could no longer be available for the benefits which, during his state of innocence, it assured to him. He might have ignorantly had recourse to it still as the means of life, if he had continued in Paradise: and therefore God drove him out from thence, and placed cherubim with a fiery sword at the gate of Eden, to prevent him from making any such rash attempt; so that he might be shut up to the salvation which was now revealed to him through the promised Seed. [Genesis 3:22-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Gen 3.22-24).

Now the privilege which he forfeited is, through Christ, renewed to us: or rather, I should say, the privilege which he enjoyed in the *shadow*, is now imparted to us in the *substance*. He possessed his by obeying the commandments written on his heart; and we enjoy ours by obeying the commandments revealed to us in the Gospel. He possessed not his by any claim of merit, but by the free and sovereign gift of God: nor do we obtain ours but in a way of sovereign grace.

Yet, as in his case, so in ours, the work and the reward are inseparable: and the very "right" conceded to him by works, is given to us by faith. The very word which we here translate "right," is, in another part of the same author's works, translated "power;" "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." There is between this passage and our text a perfect identity of importance. In both cases, access to Christ, as the tree of life, was given by faith; and that access to Christ, and consequent participation of his benefits, was a pledge of eternal life.

True, in order to a full enjoyment of the final reward, there must be, as in Adam's case, an obedience also to the moral law. But, in both cases, *the reward is ultimately and equally of grace*. What would have been given to him without a Mediator, if he had continued obedient to God's commands—will be given to us through a Mediator, notwithstanding our past disobedience; provided we comply with the requisitions of the Gospel, by a life of faith, and by a life of holiness.

In both cases, obedience is equally a *condition*of eternal life—

Persons are apt to take offence at the word condition. But the word is proper or improper, according to the sense we annex to it. Strictly speaking, obedience would not have given to Adam in Paradise any claim to Heaven, any further than Heaven had been promised to him as a reward, in the event of his continuing faultless throughout the whole period appointed for his probation. But to a person seeking salvation by the law, it would actually give ground for boasting, because he would demand salvation as a debt.

But under the Gospel, however obedient we be, our hope of salvation is founded on Christ alone; and to all eternity must the glory of it be given to him alone. Hence, *when we speak of obedience as a condition of eternal life, we mean no more, than that without it no salvation can be attained; obedience being the necessary fruit of faith, and the only possible evidence of our fitness for Heaven*.

In this, its true and only proper sense, we most cordially adopt the language of our text, and say, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to eat of the tree of life, and enter in through the gates of the city."

Whatever was accorded to Adam in Paradise, during his obedience to the law, shall be given to us, if we be obedient to the Gospel. Was he strengthened and comforted by the tree of life? so shall we be, by a life of faith in Christ Jesus, who is the tree of life which bears twelve manner of fruits—the summer-fruits of prosperity, and the winter-fruits of adversity, according as the necessities of his people shall require. And, as the heavenly Paradise would have been his; so will that city, described in the foregoing chapter, be ours, with the freest participation of all its riches and of all its honors.

***~~Application—To all then I say,~~***

***~~1. Perform your duties—~~***

Come to Christ, every one of you, as sinners, that you may be saved from wrath through him. And endeavor to live altogether to His glory, showing forth, in all things, your faith by your works.

***~~2. Enjoy your privileges—~~***

Go to the tree of life; take of it freely; and eat of it every hour of your lives. You are told, that "the very leaves of that tree are for the healing of the nations." What then shall its fruits be? Truly, a life of faith in the Son of God, as having loved you and given himself for you, shall richly supply your every want; and be not a pledge only, but a foretaste also, of Heaven itself. Go now, and survey the heavenly city, its foundations, its walls, its gates of pearls, its very pavement of the purest gold: it is all yours; yours by "right," by title, by the strongest of all possible claims—the promise and the oath of God. Live in expectation of it now, and you shall soon enjoy it for evermore.

#2533

***~~CHRIST THE MORNING STAR~~***

***~~[Revelation 22:16](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 22.16)~~***

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

THE Revelation which had been made to John, contained predictions of an uninterrupted series of events from that time even to the end of the world. They had indeed been made to him through the instrumentality of an angel: but they were nevertheless as certain, as if they had been delivered immediately by God himself; seeing that the angel had received his commission and instructions directly from Jesus, who is "the Lord of the holy prophets. Compare verse 6. with the text." It seems to have been with a view to assure John, together with the saints in all succeeding ages, of the truth and certainty of all that had been spoken, that Jesus gave this description of his own character: in which we may see,

***~~I. His PERSONAL character—~~***

***~~That Jesus was "the OFFSPRING of David," is obvious enough—~~***

He was to be so according to the Scriptures. [Isaiah 11:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 11.1); and that he was so, both by his father's and his mother's side, the genealogies that are given of him expressly affirm. Matthew 1 and Luke 3. Indeed Divine Providence so ordered it, that, in consequence of a taxation decreed throughout the Roman Empire in the time of Caesar Augustus, his reputed father was under the necessity of going up to Bethlehem to be taxed there: by which means there was a public enrolment of the name of Jesus, (who was born there at that time,) as belonging to the house and lineage of David. [Luke 2:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 2.1-6).

***~~But He was no less "the ROOT" also of David—~~***

How this could be, was but little understood, until after the day of Pentecost. Jesus did indeed often speak of himself as God; but still his Disciples did not clearly apprehend his meaning. Yet that the Messiah, who was to be "a Child born and a Son given," was also to be "the Mighty God," even "God with us," was fully and distinctly revealed in the prophetic writings. [Isaiah 9:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 9.6) and [Isaiah 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 7.14), with [Matthew 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 1.23). But the most learned of the Jewish Rabbis, when a remarkable prophecy to this effect was adduced from the Psalms by our blessed Lord, were unable to solve the difficulty proposed to them: they could not explain how David's Son could possibly be David's Lord. [Psalm 110:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 110.1) with [Matthew 22:41-46](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 22.41-46).

Nor can our modern Socinians ever return a satisfactory answer to our Lord's question; which can only be answered by acknowledging, that *Jesus is God as well as man—the Creator of all things in his Divine nature, though himself a creature according to his human nature*. It is in this sense that he was "the Root," at the same time that he was also "the Offspring," of David: and to this agree the most decided testimonies of Holy Writ. [John 1:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.1); [John 1:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.14). [Romans 1:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 1.3-4); [Romans 9:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rom 9.5).

Our Lord proceeds to mention,

***~~II. His OFFICIAL character—~~***

The voice of prophecy announced him as "a Star that should come out of Jacob. [Numbers 24:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Num 24.17)." But in our text he designates himself as "the Morning star." Now it is the office of the morning star, not merely to give light, as others do, but to usher in the day: and in this particular view the title assumed by our Lord should be exclusively considered. We observe then, that,

***~~1. By his first rising in the world he introduced the Gospel day—~~***

Previous to his appearing, there were some faint glimmerings of light, by means of the types and shadows of the Mosaic law: but as soon as he entered on his ministry, he diffused a light around him; dispelling the mists by which the Pharisees had obscured the law, and exhibiting in his own person a perfect pattern of that obedience which the law required. By his death he accomplished the prophecies, and showed more clearly what were the designs of God respecting the redemption of the world: and by his resurrection and ascension, and sending down the Holy Spirit to testify of him, he gave to the benighted world the light of perfect day. Then he appeared as "the Day-spring from on high. [Luke 1:78](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 1.78)," even as "the Sun of Righteousness, that had arisen with healing in his wings. [Malachi 4:2](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mal 4.2)."

***~~2. By his rising in the heart, he now introduces the day of salvation into the soul—~~***

That there is to be a manifestation of Christ to the hearts of men, different from anything that is given to the unregenerate soul, is certain, [John 14:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 14.21-23); and Peter speaks of it expressly as "the day-star arising in our hearts, [2 Peter 1:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Pet 1.19)." What kind of a manifestation this is, may be conceived from the history of Zaccheus, to whose soul it was made, and who experienced the instantaneous benefits arising from it. [Luke 19:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 19.5-6), [9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 19.9). This change was by no means peculiar to him; it is wrought in all who truly embrace the Gospel. [Acts 26:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Acts 26.18), though, in respect of suddenness, it may greatly vary.

The distinguishing effect of this manifestation is, that the glorious character of Christ, which was before hidden from our eyes, is now distinctly seen. [John 1:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.4-5), [9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.9), [14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.14); and [2 Corinthians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.6); and he is embraced, as the most valued treasure of the soul. [Philippians. 3:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Phil. 3.7-8), the ground of ineffable and eternal joy. [1 Peter 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Pet 1.8).

***~~3. By his present light he gives us an assured prospect of yet a brighter day even in this world—~~***

It is certain that there is a day approaching, when the light now given to the Church shall be greatly increased; when "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of many days. [Isaiah 30:26](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 30.26)." This will surely take place in the Millennium, when "the Lord will bind up the breach of his ancient people the Jews, and heal the stroke of their wound."

Then the whole Gentile world also shall be made to behold his glory: and "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as completely and as deeply as the waters cover the sea." This idea seems to be peculiarly referred to, inasmuch as the morning-star is the sure forerunner of a brighter state under the influence of the rising sun. In this view, all that has hitherto been done for the Church shall be only as the drop before the shower, seeing that the whole world shall form, as it were, but one great temple, which "God himself will fill with his glory, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof. [Revelation 21:23](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.23)."

***~~4. By his appearing at the end of the world, he will introduce eternal day—~~***

He tells us that at that period he will "give to his obedient people the Morning star. [Revelation 2:28](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 2.28)." Yes, he will come again in his glory, and in all the brightness and majesty of the Godhead: and then will all remaining darkness be forever banished. *Now*we "know but in part," and "see but as in a glass darkly: but *then*shall we see face to face." Then all the mysterious designs of God from the beginning will be brought forth to light, together with the reasons of all his dispensations: then will all the perfections of God shine forth with united splendor, not only in the work of redemption as wrought out by Christ, but in the salvation of every individual among his people. And how will the wisdom of a life of godliness then appear!

Then indeed will be consummated the happiness of man; and God be glorified in all.

***~~Application—~~***

***~~1. To those who have never yet beheld the glory of Christ—~~***

As in the days of his flesh, so in this day, it is not everyone to whom the light comes, that duly apprehends it. [John 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.5), [10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.10-11). Satan is yet successful in blinding the eyes of many. [2 Corinthians 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 4.4). If you have never yet seen Jesus as "fairer than ten thousand, and altogether lovely," this is your unhappy state. O pray then that God would open your eyes, and "call you out of darkness into his marvelous light!" Until then you can have no real fellowship with God, nor any hope of acceptance through the blood of Jesus. [1 John 1:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.6-7).

***~~2. To those who profess to know and love him—~~***

Happy is it for you if your profession be justified by your actual experience. But you must remember, that there are many who "say, they are in the light, and yet are in darkness even until now;" yes, they "walk in darkness, and know not where they go, because that darkness has blinded their eyes."

Would you know, who are in that state: I answer, All they who, in the midst of a profession of religion, are indulging any of those tempers that are contrary to love and charity. [1 John 2:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.9-11). Hear this, O you censorious and uncharitable, you proud and envious, you fretful and passionate professors!*Talk not of the light you have in your heads, while there is such darkness in your hearts*. You must be able to say of your tempers, as well as of your principles, "The darkness is past, and the true light now shines. [1 John 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.8)." If you cannot appeal both to God and man for the truth of this, deceive not your own souls: for if you are children of light indeed, you must walk in the light, "even as Christ himself walked. [1 Thessalonians 5:5-8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Thess 5.5-8). [1 John 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 2.8)." But, let such a change be wrought in your whole spirit and conduct, and Christ will surely "give you the morning star"—the full enjoyment of his presence and glory in the eternal world.

#2534

***~~INVITATION TO COME TO CHRIST~~***

***~~[Revelation 22:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 22.17)~~***

The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

RICH beyond expression are the blessings held forth to us in the word of life: and as free as light are the invitations given us to partake of them. Not only in the epistles to the seven Churches, and in the other parts of this prophetic book, but throughout the whole Scriptures, is every possible encouragement afforded to the sinners of mankind, to repent of sin, and to "lay hold upon the hope that is set before them" in the Gospel. And here, in the close of the inspired volume, are invitations to us reiterated from every quarter, that we may be prevailed upon to accept of mercy, before the *door of mercy*is forever closed.

Let us consider,

***~~I. The blessings to which we are invited—~~***

They are here designated by "the water of life." We will notice them,

***~~1. Generally—~~***

The source from whence this water flows, is no other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. In the very chapter before us, "the pure river of the water of life" is said to "proceed out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, verse 1." As in the wilderness, the water gushing from the rock that had been smitten supplied the necessities of all Israel; so the Lord Jesus Christ, when smitten with the rod of the law, poured forth the waters of salvation for the benefit of the whole world. 1 Corinthians 10:4. He is "the fountain of living waters. [Jeremiah 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Jer 2.13);" and whoever comes to him, may drink and live forever.

In the chapter before our text, the Lord Jesus Christ declared this to the Apostle John: "I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. [Revelation 21:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 21.6)." In the days of his flesh, he spoke repeatedly to this effect.

To the Samaritan woman, of whom he had asked a draught of water, he said, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says unto you, Give me a drink, you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water. [John 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.10)."

On another occasion, when the people had, according to custom, drawn water from the pool of Siloam, he stood in the place of public concourse, and cried, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink: and out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." This latter expression is then explained by the Evangelist, who adds, "This he spoke of the Spirit, which those who believe in him should receive. [John 7:37-39](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 7.37-39)."

Now here we have, in a general view, the import of the expression in my text. *The Holy Spirit is that water of life*which Christ is empowered to bestow: and wherever that blessed Spirit is imparted, there is within the person's own bosom a principle of life, seeking for vent in all suitable expressions of duty to God; or, as our Lord elsewhere expresses it, "there is within him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. [John 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 4.14);" to which the Holy Spirit, in all his tendencies and operations, leads us to aspire.

***~~2. More particularly—~~***

Three blessings in particular I will specify, as granted by our Lord Jesus Christ unto all who come unto him; namely, pardon, and holiness, and glory.

The Lord Jesus will in the first place bestow the **pardon**of our sins. He is said by the prophet to be "the Fountain opened for sin and for impurity. [Zechariah 13:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Zech 13.1);" and all who come to wash in that fountain are cleansed from all their sins. In it even "sins of a crimson dye" are made as "white as snow. [Isaiah 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 1.18);" as it is said, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin. [1 John 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 John 1.7)."

For the purposes of **sanctification**also shall this gift be bestowed: for, by the Prophet Ezekiel, he says, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. [Ezekiel 36:25-27](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ezek 36.25-27)"

Eternal **glory**also will he confer upon them: for, when they have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," he will "lead them unto living fountains of waters. [Revelation 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 7.14), [17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Revelation 7.17)," and will cause them to "drink of the rivers of pleasure" which are "at God's right hand for evermore. [Psalm 36:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 36.8); [Psalm 16:11](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 16.11)."

Let us now turn our attention to,

***~~II. The invitation itself—~~***

Here we cannot but notice the very peculiar urgency and freeness of it—

***~~1. The URGENCY, to overcome reluctance—~~***

"The **Spirit**says, Come." The Holy Spirit of God has undertaken the office of revealing Christ to men, and of bringing sinners to Christ for the remission of their sins. [John 16:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.8), [14](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 16.14). He descended visibly on the day of Pentecost for these ends; and by the ministry of the Apostles, as also by his operation on the souls of men, wrought powerfully upon multitudes, whom he "made willing in the day of his power," and effectually subdued to the obedience of faith.

Thus at this time also is he carrying on the work that has been assigned him in the economy of redemption. In the written word, he speaks to us. By the ministry of his servants, he pleads with us. By the convictions which he fastens on our mind and conscience, he strives with us individually; if by any means he may constrain us to accept the blessings offered to us in the Gospel. His voice to us every day and hour is, "Come," come to Christ as the Savior of your soul.

"The **Bride**also says, Come." The Bride is the Church, "the Lamb's wife," who has experienced in her own person all the blessedness of that salvation which she is so desirous of imparting to all around her. The Church of old addressed her Lord, saying, "Draw me, and we will run after you. [Song of Solomon 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Song 1.4);" that is, 'Draw me, and I will not come alone: I will surely labor to the utmost of my power to make known to others the wonders of your love, that they also may be partakers of my felicity, and unite with me in honoring and adoring you.'

Thus the Church does in every age. She is "the pillar and ground of the truth. [1 Timothy. 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Tim. 3.15)," supporting it firmly in the world, and exhibiting, as by public inscriptions that are visible to all, the glory and excellency of the Gospel salvation. She then unites with the Spirit of God in saying to all around her, "Come!" Come to Jesus and see what a Savior he is. See in me what he both can and will do for you also; however far off you may now be, you may draw near to him with a full assurance of acceptance with him; and though now "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, you may become fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God. [Ephesians 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph 2.19)."

"Let him also that hears, say, Come." Those to whom the foregoing invitations are announced, should unite their efforts to make them known, and to induce every creature under Heaven to accept them. Think not, brethren, that you have performed your duty when you have heard these invitations from the lips of your minister; no, nor when you have yourselves complied with his advice. *You are all to be preachers*in your own circles; all to repeat to your friends and relatives, your families and dependents, the glad tidings which you hear of a free and full salvation; and, with one heart and one voice, should join in saying to all around you, "Come, come, come!" This was the conduct of Andrew and of Philip, when they had found the Savior. [John 1:40-41](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.40-41); [John 1:43](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.43); [John 1:45](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 1.45); and this must be the conduct of us all, in our respective spheres.

***~~2. The FREENESS, to counteract despondency—~~***

We are all invited to "take of the water of life freely." If we are "athirst," we are the very persons whose names, if I may so speak, are especially written on the cards of invitation. Indeed, if our names had been expressly recorded in this passage, we should not have had a thousandth part of the assurance of God's willingness to accept us that we now have; for there might be other persons of our name: but no mourning penitent in the universe can err in tracing his name in the designation that is here given.

It may be, however, that some may say, 'I am not sufficiently athirst to be able to appropriate to myself this character. I would be glad indeed to obtain mercy of the Lord; but I do not pant after it as the deer after the water-brooks, and therefore I have not in myself the qualification that is here required.'

To counteract such desponding fears, the Savior says, "*Whoever*will, let him take of the water of life freely." If you have not all the thirst that you can wish, have you the inclination? have you the desire? Then you are the person invited: and you must not dream of staying until you can bring certain qualifications along with you, but come and take these blessings "freely, without money and without price. [Isaiah 55:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 55.1)."

***~~To impress this subject the more deeply on your minds, let me address a few words,~~***

***~~1. To the RELUCTANT—~~***

Many are the excuses which you urge for your declining the invitation sent to you in the Gospel: and to you they appear perhaps sufficient to justify your refusal. But your Lord and Savior will not be deceived: he sees the radical indisposition of your mind to the blessings which he offers you; and will say of you, as he did in reference to those of old, "They shall never taste of my supper! [Luke 14:16-24](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke 14.16-24)." You may be offering a variety of pleas: but he will put the true construction on them all, "You *will not*come unto me that you may have life. [John 5:40](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/John 5.40)." O think, how bitterly you will regret your present conduct, when you shall see unnumbered myriads, who were once as far off from him as you now are, sitting down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb, and you yourselves be cast out into outer darkness! What weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth will you then experience to all eternity! [Matthew 8:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 8.11-12). How will those words sound in your ears at the last day, "Often would I have gathered you, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings; but you would not! [Matthew 23:37](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 23.37)."

Do but reflect on this one moment, "I would; and you would not." Truly, that reflection will constitute the very summit of your misery in Hell. I pray you, hold not out any longer against the urgent invitations which are now sent to you; but come unto the Savior, and accept the *rest*which he has promised to all that are weary and heavy-laden.

***~~2. To the DESPONDING—~~***

What can the Savior add to convince you of his willingness to accept and bless you? Perhaps you will say, 'I have tried to come to him, and I cannot: and I have tried so long, that I think it in vain to entertain a hope of final success.' Is this the case? Then hear what the Savior says to you by the Prophet Isaiah: 'When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them: I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.' [Isaiah 41:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 41.17-18).

Now I cannot conceive a case more desperate than that which is here depicted:

The person is in himself "poor and needy." (There you will easily recognize your own character.

He has "sought for water," even for the waters of salvation. (That represents what you also profess to have done.)

He has "found none." (There is your unhappy lot painted with the utmost precision.)

"His tongue fails for thirst;" so that he is ready to sink in utter despair. (What can you add to that, to bring it home more fully to your own case?)

Yet this is the very person for whom God has reserved his blessings, and to whom he engages to impart them.

'But I am in such a state, that it is almost impossible to deliver me: you might as well expect a river to be running over the highest mountains, as for the waters of salvation to reach me.'

Is that the case? says the Savior: then "I will open rivers in high places; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."

See here, my brethren, what wonderful condescension there is in your Lord and Savior, that he will so describe your case, that it should not be possible for you to fail in recognizing your own character, or to doubt any longer his ability and willingness to save you. Take then this passage; and rely upon it; and plead it with him; and expect the accomplishment of it to your own soul. Then shall "your light rise in obscurity, and your darkness be as the noon-day. [Isaiah 58:10](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 58.10)." You shall find that the Savior is not "a fountain sealed. [Song of Solomon 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Song 4.12)," but "a fountain opened. [Psalm 36:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Ps 36.9). [Joel 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Joel 3.18);" and "out of that well of salvation you shall drink water with joy" for evermore. [Isaiah 12:3](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 12.3).

#2535

***~~THE PERFECTION AND SANCTITY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES~~***

***~~[Revelation 22:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 22.18-19)~~***

I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall *add*unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall *take away*from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

THE voice of inspiration carrying with it the authority of Jehovah, it might be expected that persons, eager to establish particular sentiments of their own, or to draw disciples after them—would profess to have received revelations from Heaven, so that they might obtain a more entire and extended influence over their adherents. To prevent such impositions under the Mosaic dispensation, God said to the whole of Israel, "You shall not *add*unto the word which I command you, neither shall you *diminish*ought from it. [Deuteronomy 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Deut 4.12)."

In like manner, at the close of the Christian dispensation, our Lord directed his servant John to record this solemn declaration: "I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall *add*unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and, if any man shall *take away*from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

In its primary sense, this declaration seems to refer to the particular book which contains the Revelation of John; but, as this book completes and closes the sacred canon, I consider the warning as extending to the whole of the New Testament Scriptures; and as making known to us,

***~~I. The PERFECTION of the Scriptures—~~***

That may be considered as perfect, to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be withdrawn. Now the Scriptures, in this view of them, are perfect: for there is nothing in them either superfluous or defective. They are perfect,

***~~1. As a revelation from God—~~***

That they might discover to us many things which are at present either altogether hidden, or but obscurely revealed, is certain; but *they have made known to us all that we are concerned to know*; and the secret counsels, which, if revealed, would have only increased to our pride, are better hidden from our view. Indeed, *God has hidden many things on purpose, that, while we behold much which he alone could reveal*—we may be constrained to humble ourselves before him as creatures who are altogether indebted to him for all the light they enjoy, and dependent on him for the instruction which they hope yet farther to receive.

In the Holy Scriptures, Jehovah displays, as it were, before our eyes, all his *glorious perfections*, and opens to us his *eternal purposes*, especially respecting the redemption of the world by the incarnation and death of his only-begotten Son. In them too, the *person, work, and offices of Christ*are all set before us; and that with such plainness that we cannot err, and with such a weight of evidence that we cannot doubt.

***~~2. As a directory to us—~~***

In this view also they are perfect: for while, *on the one hand, there is nothing revealed for the mere purpose of gratifying our curiosity; so, on the other hand, there is nothing withheld that could in any way conduce to the welfare of our souls*.

Respecting the whole of *spiritual life*, we have all the instruction that can be desired. The manner in which that life is imparted, and carried on unto perfection, is so fully delineated, that there is nothing lacking either for our direction or encouragement.

And for our behavior towards men, there is a path marked out for us in general principles, which are applicable to every situation and circumstance in which we can be placed; and it is yet further traced out to us in examples, which serve to illustrate every virtue which we can be called to exercise.

Nor have we any cause to complain that the rules were not more minute and numerous: for to have made a specific rule for every possible case would have been of no service, because the Scriptures would have been so voluminous, that a whole life of study would not have been sufficient to make us acquainted with them. But by laying down a few general principles, and embodying them in living examples, God has given us all the information that we can need. In every relation of life, whether as husbands or wives, parents or children, masters or servants, magistrates or subjects, we have rules laid down for us, from which we cannot greatly deviate, if only we implore of God the guidance of his Spirit. Only "let our eye be single, and our whole body will be full of light."

In the prohibition to add to, or take from, the Holy Scriptures, we also behold,

***~~II. The SANCTITY of the Scriptures—~~***

Nothing can exceed the strictness with which the smallest alteration of God's blessed word is forbidden—

If we *add*to the inspired writings, God will lay on us all the plagues which are there denounced against sin and sinners. If we *take away*from them, "God will take away our part from the book of life," and never allow us to taste any of those blessings which they hold forth in rich abundance to the upright soul.

In many other places we read of specific judgments denounced against sin; but in no place are the denunciations of God's wrath so full and comprehensive as in the passage before us. It was necessary that a fiery sword should be thus waved before our eyes, to prevent us from trespassing on that hallowed ground: and though some slight alterations might seem allowable for the purpose of accommodating the expressions of Scripture more to our own apprehensions or desires, yet will God on no account suffer us to suppress or add one single word.

Nor is the severity of the prohibition at all more alarming than the occasion requires—

*In no other way can we offer a greater insult to GOD, or do a greater injury to man, than by erasing what God has spoken, or by obtruding any conceits of our own under the sanction of his authority*. If we presume to *leave out*anything which God has revealed, what is it but an impeachment of his wisdom in revealing it? And if we presume to *add*anything to his word, what is it but a denial of his goodness, in withholding from us information which he ought to have communicated?

Both in the one case and the other, it is a most impious imposition upon MAN, whom we defraud by our concealment of the truth, or deceive by substituting our own fallible dogmas in the place of it.

When Moses made the tabernacle, this solemn injunction was repeatedly given to him; "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown to you in the mount." And it would have been at his peril to have deviated in any respect from it; because the whole structure, together with all the furniture thereof, was typical of things which were to be more fully revealed under the Christian dispensation: any departure from the instructions given him would have destroyed the beauty and harmony of the whole.

So will it be at our peril to change or modify any part of that system which God has revealed in his word. We must take the whole simply as we have received it, and not in any respect presume to be wise above what is written.

The prohibition to alter the Scriptures yet farther marks,

***~~III. The REVERENCE due to the Scriptures—~~***

If we are not to change the word of Scripture, neither are we to elude its force. On the contrary, we are to maintain the strictest jealousy over ourselves, that we make no portion of the inspired writings void, but that we adhere to them with the utmost possible fidelity,

***~~1. In our exposition of the MEANING of the Scriptures—~~***

It is perfectly surprising to see with what unhallowed boldness many will put their own construction upon God's blessed word, denying its plainest import, and annexing to it a sense totally contrary to its most obvious meaning.

To what a fearful extent this liberty has been taken by Papists is well known: but, to the shame of Protestants, I must confess, that in this guilt they also participate to a great extent. Nor do I here speak of those only who fearlessly expunge those parts of Scripture which are hostile to their views; but of those adverse parties in the Church, who, while they profess to reverence the whole of the inspired volume—wrest and pervert its plainest assertions, in order to maintain a *theological system*of their own. This it is that has introduced endless dissensions, divisions, and bitter animosities into the Church of Christ. Men have adopted sentiments of their own, instead of submitting to be taught of God; and then they have labored, by *forced constructions*and ingenious theories, to make the Scriptures accord with their views. The different parties all see and condemn this disingenuousness in their adversaries, while yet, without remorse, they practice it themselves.

In truth, so fettered are the great mass even of teachers themselves by human theological systems, that there are scarcely any to be found, who will dare to give to the whole of Scripture its true meaning, and to bring forward in their ministrations all that God has spoken in his word. So vitiated is the taste of the generality of their hearers, that scarcely any would be found to approve of this fidelity, even if it were exercised towards them.

The pious reformers of the established Church were of a different mind; they have faithfully declared to us the whole counsel of God: but among their degenerate children there are few who follow their example; almost all having ranged themselves as partisans of opposite and contending opinions—instead of conforming themselves simply to the declarations of Holy Writ. But I hope the time is not far distant, when all the articles of our Church will be equally esteemed, and every truth of Scripture be impartially brought forward in our public ministrations.

***~~2. In our submission to the AUTHORITY of the Scriptures—~~***

To every part of God's blessed word we should bow with meek submission; not regarding any doctrine as "a hard saying," or doubting the truth of it because it exceeds our comprehension. We are but children; and, as children, we should receive with implicit reverence whatever has been spoken by our heavenly Instructor. And if with simplicity of mind we receive the first principles of the oracles of God, we shall have our understandings progressively enlarged, and be gradually guided into all truth. In relation to those things which we do not at present understand, we should be content to say, "What I know not now—I shall know hereafter."

So likewise, in reference to the COMMANDS of God; no one of them should be considered as "grievous," but all be viewed as "holy, and just, and good." To explain them away, or to lower them to the standard of our own attainments, is criminal in a high degree. We should have no wish but to be conformed to the mind and will of God, and to *have our whole souls poured, as it were, into the mold of his Gospel*.

As far as respects the impiety of the act, it matters very little whether we change the *words*or the *sense*of the Holy Scriptures: in either case we greatly offend God, and entail on ourselves all the judgments that are denounced against us in the text.

***~~APPLICATION—~~***

The words immediately following my text may well serve to enforce every word that has been spoken. It is the Lord Jesus Christ himself who "testifies of these things," and who, to impress them the more deeply on our minds, says, "Surely I come quickly." He will come quickly, and whatever he has spoken shall surely come to pass; not one jot or tittle of it shall ever fail.

We may now *take away*from his word, or add to it, as seems good to us; but in that day his word shall stand; and his judgments be dispensed in perfect accordance with it.

We may deceive others by our perversions of Scripture, and may even deceive ourselves: but Him we cannot deceive: nor, when he shall pass sentence on us for our temerity, shall we be able to elude his vengeance.

I pray you then to regard the Scriptures with the veneration that is due to them. Do not imagine that they were given us for the purpose of displaying our skill in controversy; though I deny not but that we ought to combat error, and to contend earnestly for the faith delivered to the saints. The inspired volume is holy ground: and we should "put off our shoes," as it were, whenever we enter upon it, and implore help from God, that we may be enabled to "receive it with meekness as an engrafted word," and find it effectual to save our souls.

#2536

***~~THE COMING OF CHRIST DESIRED~~***

***~~[Revelation 22:20](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Rev 22.20)~~***

He who testifies these things says, Surely I come quickly! Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

IN the Book of Revelation is contained a series of prophecies, from the apostolic age to the end of the world. To them must nothing be added: from them must nothing be withdrawn. To alter anything contained in them is at the peril of our souls. In perfect agreement with them will every event be found at the last: the Church will triumph; her enemies will be put to shame; and the Lord Jesus Christ, into whose hands all things are committed, will be glorified in all. Speedily, too, will this desirable result appear: for "He who testifies of these things," even the Lord Jesus Christ, the Judge of the living and dead, says, "Surely I come quickly." And his beloved Apostle, to whom he had revealed these things, welcomed the glorious consummation, saying, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Now, in these words we see Christ's coming to judgment,

***~~I. As a period to be expected—~~***

***~~Of this period the whole of the Scriptures testify—~~***

In the *Old Testament*indeed, little, in comparison, is spoken of it: yet we can have no doubt but that it was known, not only to the descendants of Abraham, but even before the flood: for Jude tells us, that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied respecting it, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes, with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all. Jude, verse 14, 15."

In the *New Testament*it forms a very prominent part of the inspired records; continual reference being made to that period, and the circumstances that shall then take place being fully developed:

The person of the Judge,

the manner of his advent,

the establishment of his tribunal,

the solemnities of his judgment,

the final sentence which he will pronounce, and

the eternal states of men fixed in perfect accordance with it—are all described, with a minuteness which places everything, as it were, before our eyes, and enables us to anticipate with certainty the whole process. [Matthew 25:31-34](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt 25.31-34).

***~~And it is now fast approaching—~~***

Time, in our eyes, appears long: but "with God, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Our blessed Lord, when on earth, spoke of it as near at hand. Paul adverted to it in such strong terms, that he was misunderstood by many, whose misconceptions he afterwards removed by a more plain and full declaration respecting it. Since the period that this revelation was given to John, above seventeen hundred years have elapsed: so that, if at that time it could be said by our Lord, "Surely I come quickly," much more must it be true at this day. Even in reference to the general judgment, it is true; because the time that shall intervene before it, is no more, in comparison of eternity, than the twinkling of an eye.

But, in reference to individuals, it is true, even in the most obvious and literal sense: for our time is only like a shadow that departs, and hastens away like the eagle in its flight. "Surely," my beloved brethren, as it respects every one among us, "the Judge is at the door!" For anything that we know, we may this very day or hour be summoned into his presence, and receive at his hands our final doom.

Yet, as solemn as the future judgment will be, we may well contemplate it,

***~~II. As an event to be desired—~~***

Not that it is desirable to all: for, when it shall arrive, many will call upon the rocks to fall upon them, and the hills to cover them from the presence of their Judge. To those alone can it be an object of desire, who are "prepared to meet their God." For this high attainment three things are requisite:

***~~1. A view of salvation, as wrought out by Christ—~~***

The proud self-righteous moralist can never desire that day. He may indeed so harden himself in unbelief, as to feel no dread of judgment; and so deceive his own soul, as to think that the outcome of it will be favorable to him. But he cannot look forward to that event with real satisfaction. He knows not what it is to be "looking for, and hastening unto, the coming of the day of Christ." He has no solid ground of hope: when he reflects candidly on his state, he cannot but feel some secret misgivings, that all will not be well with him; and, consequently, he cannot really desire that day. On the contrary, it would be a satisfaction to him to be informed that there should be no judgment, and that all should sleep a perpetual sleep.

***~~2. A hope of salvation, as obtained through Christ—~~***

It is not a mere knowledge of the Gospel that will bear up the soul in the prospect of that great event. There must be in us some consciousness that we have fled to Christ for refuge, and laid hold on the hope that is set before us. It is a small matter to us that Christ has come into the world, and died for us, if we have not somewhat of a well-grounded hope of an interest in him. When we can see the promises as freely made to us, and are enabled to rest upon them, then may we look forward with composure to the dissolution of our earthly tabernacle, and to the transmission of our souls to "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. [2 Corinthians 5:1](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/2 Cor 5.1)."

***~~3. An assurance of salvation, as already enjoyed in Christ—~~***

This is given to many of God's favored people: and, though I say not that it is necessary to saving faith, I must say, that without it no man can cordially adopt the language of my text, and say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." We must have some assurance of our acceptance with God, before we can really desire to enter into his presence; and some sense of an interest in Christ, before we can truly "love his appearing." But if "the Spirit of God bears witness with our spirits that we are his children," then may we number death among our "treasures. [1 Corinthians 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 3.22)," and "desire to depart, that we may be with Christ."

Then may we adopt the triumphant language of the Apostle, and say, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" for then our great enemy is slain, and "God has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ;" yes, "death is swallowed up in victory. [Isaiah 25:8](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa 25.8) with [1 Corinthians 15:54-57](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1 Cor 15.54-57)," and Heaven itself is commenced in the soul.

***~~OBSERVE, then—~~***

***~~1. How sad is the prospect of those who are yet in their sins!~~***

Whether you will believe it or not, know assuredly, that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming quickly, to call you into judgment: and to him shall you *give account, not only of your words and actions, but of the most "secret counsels of your hearts*." How terrible is this thought to those who have never repented of their sins, nor ever sought for mercy through the Redeemer's blood! I would that I might prevail upon you, my beloved brethren, to lay to heart this awful consideration, while it may yet avail for your good. But let death once execute his commission, and drag you to the judgment-seat of Christ, and all your future regrets will be in vain: your sentence will then be pronounced upon you, and your doom be sealed forever.

***~~2. What a sweet reality there is in religion!~~***

See what the Gospel can effect even in this present life! what peace it can bring into the soul; and what an assurance respecting its eternal interests! I will not presume to say that it will open to a man the book of God's decrees, and show him his name written in Heaven; but it will give him a confidence respecting the issue of the future judgment, and a joyful anticipation of eternal blessedness.

Only therefore seek an acquaintance with the Lord Jesus, and an experience of his love—and then may you look forward to his advent with exceeding joy, and welcome it as the consummation and completion of your eternal bliss!